

GESTALT THERAPY IMPASSE RESOLUTION
AS A RELIGIOUS PROCESS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Eric Hunter Beaumont
June 1976

This dissertation, written by

Eric Hunter Beaumont

*under the direction of his Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee

Paul Schurman

Chairman

John B. Cobb Jr.

Alan W. Rhoades

Date December 15, 1975

George C. Pfeiffer, Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge an indebtedness to my teachers:

To John B. Cobb, Jr., whose combination of scholarly frustrating and compassionate support fostered much pain and much learning.

To the members of the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Los Angeles, who brought the process into living actuality in my life. Especially Gary Yonteff who read early drafts of the manuscript, and to Robert Resnick, Allen Darbonne and Robert Martin.

I owe a great debt to my wife, without whose patience and support the task would remain undone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	viii
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	2
Movement of Religion Toward Psychology	2
Psychology's Movement Toward Religion	8
PROBLEM OF THE STUDY	11
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	12
IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY	12
Importance to Gestalt Therapy	12
Importance to Religion	13
METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY	13
The Cases	14
Analysis	15
DEFINITION OF TERMS	16
Process	16
Religious Process	19
Gestalt Therapy	20
Impasse and Impasse Resolution	21
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	22
Limitations Imposed by the Definition of Religious Process	22
Limitations of Process Analysis	24
Limitations of Impasse Resolution	25
ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY	25
Impasse as Process in Gestalt Therapy	25
Impasse Resolution in Three Transcripts	26
Theology of Paul as Religious Process	26
Implications and Conclusions	26
2. IMPASSE RESOLUTION AS PROCESS IN GESTALT THERAPY: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . .	27
SOME ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS	30
Gestalt Psychology and the Nature of Existence . .	30
Contact Functions	36
The Now	39

Chapter	Page
Ego Functions and the Organism	40
Polarities	41
THE LAYERS OF NEUROSIS: A CRITIQUE	43
GESTALT THERAPY THEORY OF NEUROSIS: PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING PRIOR TO IMPASSE RESOLUTION	47
Neurotic Splitting of Existence	49
Anxiety	51
Neurotic Deadness: Implosion and Explosion	53
IMPASSE AND IMPASSE RESOLUTION	57
GESTALT AWARENESS	62
Awareness and Contact	63
Gestalt Awareness and Presence	67
Gestalt Awareness and Integration	69
SUMMARY	72
3. IMPASSE RESOLUTION IN THREE TRANSCRIPTS	74
THE TRANSCRIPTS	75
Bruce	75
Elaine's Dream	83
Pat's Fantasy	87
4. RELIGIOUS PROCESS IN THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL	92
A PRELUDE TO PAUL	93
An Historical Note	93
Paul and Christ	94
Paul and God	96
Paul and Existential Philosophy	96
BULTMANN'S UNDERSTANDING OF PAUL	97
An Overview	97
Man Prior to Faith	99
Man Under Faith	106
PAUL'S THEOLOGY AS RELIGIOUS PROCESS	120
5. GESTALT THERAPY IMPASSE RESOLUTION AS RELIGIOUS PROCESS: COMPARISONS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS	123
COMPARISONS	123
Gestalt Therapy	124
Paul	126
Sin and Neurosis	128
Decision-question and Impasse	131
Rightwising and Impasse Resolution	132
Life Through the Spirit and Awareness	137

Chapter	Page
CONCLUSION	142
IMPLICATIONS	144
Implications for Organized Religion	145
Implications for Gestalt Therapy	150
SUMMARY	152
BIBLIOGRAPHY	154

ABSTRACT

The process of impasse and impasse-resolution is at the heart of the theory and practice of Gestalt Therapy. The religious process of "right-wising" is central to the theology of St. Paul. The study tests the hypothesis that the form and structure of these two processes are identical and it attempts to develop the implications which this hypothesis holds for psychology and religion. The basic method of the study is descriptive and critical analytic.

The study undertakes a review of the literature of Gestalt Therapy in the attempt to clarify the theoretical understanding in impasse and impasse-resolution. The study contributes to the literature in its treatment of impasse and impasse-resolution in process categories.

Impasse-resolution is viewed as a naturally occurring process which is intensified in the therapeutic context and which is characterized by the notion of "paradoxical change." Developmentally the "I" identifies with certain behavior and behavior potential and alienates other behaviors. The impasse is defined as a situation (sometimes therapeutically induced) in which neither environmental support nor the diminished behavior repertoire of the "I" are adequate for creative adjustment. Clinically, impasse is evidenced by confusion, paralysis of problem solving ability, anxiety, fear of death, etc.

Impasse resolution requires that the "I" paradoxically surrender the attempt to change itself. It must allow itself to be

changed, incorporating elements of the behavioral repertoire which were previously alienated. In intense examples of this process in Gestalt Therapy, it is often subjectively experienced and described as a process of death and re-birth. The clinical actuality of this process is demonstrated by a critical analysis of three transcripts of Gestalt Therapy sessions.

The theology of Paul as interpreted by Rudolf Bultmann describes a process in which the human condition leads to a situation in which the self is fragmented, the "I" identifying with some behavior and alienating other. This "I" attempts to "create" itself "out of its own resources." In the process of "right-wising" the "I" reaches the limits of its resources and is unable to cope effectively. It surrenders itself and is transformed, incorporating expanded behavioral potential. Paul also describes this process with reference to the metaphor of death and re-birth.

Comparison of the form of the process and the essential structural elements support the hypothesis. This comparison is made with reference to specific terms.

The study concludes with a section in which the implications are developed and suggestions made for future research.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The major premise of this investigation is that impasse resolution in Gestalt Therapy is a religious process. By implication, the concern of the dissertation is the relationship of psychology and religion, and the investigation is necessarily interdisciplinary in nature. The development of the theory of Gestalt Therapy as process constitutes a significant contribution to the literature. The theological developments go beyond the limits of psychological research and contribute significantly to the tradition of sound theological debate and practical application.

The study begins with the assertion that "impasse resolution" as a process does in fact exist. This process has been identified and described with particular clarity in the theory of Gestalt Therapy. The theoretical description of the process of impasse and impasse resolution are reviewed, and clinical actuality of the process is demonstrated by means of an analysis of three cases. The similarity of this process to a religious process described by St. Paul under the name "right-wising" is demonstrated by means of a comparison of structural elements. Finally, the claim is made that these two descriptions describe processes which are identical in form and the relationship of these two descriptions is considered.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The full value of the investigation is to be found, not only in its contributions to the fields of psychology and religion, but also in its attempt to reconcile and integrate the findings of these two systems of human knowledge and experience.

The context of the study may be summarized as an acute identity crisis for Pastoral Counseling and for humanistic psychology. Pastoral Counseling, out of its contemporary methodological poverty, turns to the technological power of psychology; and humanistic psychology, out of its symbolic, terminological and epistemological limitations, turns to religion. The result is that while the extreme forms of psychology and religion remain distinct, there is developing a large area between them where definitive distinctions are not easily drawn.

Movement of Religion Toward Psychology

Don Browning has outlined the growing sense of methodological poverty in the religious tradition which, he suggests, motivates the attraction to the relative richness of the psychotherapeutic techniques.¹ The traditional methods of pastoral care such as prayer and pastoral advice, Browning suggests, are gradually losing their effectiveness in a changing society. Many pastors look to other traditions for a

¹Don Browning, "New Trends in Pastoral Care: The Search for Method in Religious Living," *Christian Century* (September 5, 1973), 850.

methodology with which to meet the needs of their congregations.

The impact which this quest for a methodology has had upon the religious community may be indicated by a brief review of the history of Pastoral Counseling literature.

Pastoral Counseling is an official arm of American Christianity which concerns itself with the application of behavioral sciences to the religious situation. The Pastoral Counseling movement officially owes its inception to Anton Boisen.² This pioneer, following his own personal mental illness, determined to establish clinical training for pastors. His work led to the establishment of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education.

During the 1940's and 1950's, Pastoral Counseling literature reflected an optimism that it could maintain an identity as a specialized form of ministry within the organized church and distinct from "secular" psychotherapy.³ The theme was that Pastoral Counseling was distinct from secular psychotherapy because the pastoral counselor was concerned with the whole person, while the secular therapist was concerned only with behavior or with symptoms.

Carl Rogers contributed a technique and a language seemingly compatible with the neo-reformation theologies dominant at that

²Anton Theophilus Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World* (New York: Willett, Clark, 1936); *Problems in Religion and Life* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946).

³John McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper, 1951).

time.⁴ His work was interpreted and made accessible to ministers by Wayne Oates,⁵ Paul Johnson,⁶ Seward Hiltner,⁷ and Carroll Wise.⁸ The fact that the actual practice of Pastoral Counseling was often informed more by psychology than by theology was ignored in the rush to demonstrate the exciting possibilities of this new method of salvation, atonement, and revelation.

In the 1960's the "dam broke."⁹ In the face of new challenges¹⁰

⁴Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961, Sentry Edition, 1970). This is a collection of papers written during the period 1951 to 1961. It is well representative of Rogers' style and theory. See page 403 for a complete bibliography, 1930 to 1960 inclusive.

⁵Wayne Edward Oates, *The Christian Pastor* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951); *The Bible in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953); *The Religious Dimension of Personality* (New York: Association Press, 1957); *An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959).

⁶Paul Emanuel Johnson, *Psychology of Religion* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945); *Psychology of Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953); *Pastoral Ministration* (London: Nisbett, 1955); *Personality and Religion* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957); *Christian Love* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957).

⁷Seward Hiltner, *Religion and Health* (New York: Macmillan, 1943); *Pastoral Counseling* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949); *Self-understanding Through Psychology and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951); *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958).

⁸Carroll Alonzo Wise, *Religion in Illness and Health* (New York: Harper, 1942); *Pastoral Counseling* (New York: Harper, 1951).

⁹Browning, "New Trends," p. 849.

¹⁰Two important challenges were made by the "Death of God Theology" of Altizer and Hamilton, and by the "Process Theology" of Cobb. See Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1966); and John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster

neo-reformation theology lost its dominance and the Human Potential Movement and the "Third Force"¹¹ in psychotherapy which had been brewing in the background for a decade suddenly exploded into visibility with explicit concern for whole persons and "religious" issues.¹² The distinctiveness from the secular psychotherapies became confused. The pursuit of legitimate religious commitment was no longer as simple as church-affiliated vs. non-affiliated,¹³ and the literature of these new secular movements indicated that participants were experiencing profoundly religious dimensions of life without any association with the organized church.¹⁴ Three books published in 1966 reflect the changing approach of Pastoral Counseling in this era of turmoil. Howard Clinebell's *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*¹⁵ is

Press, 1965); *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962).

¹¹The terms "Human Potential Movement" and "Third Force Psychology" are generally associated with the work of Abraham Maslow, one of the first to provide an academic forum for this integrative effort. Both terms now include many traditions of psychological investigation and practice beyond Maslow's own work. See Abraham Harold Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962); *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964); *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Viking Books, 1971). A brief catalogue of "Third Force" therapies is Herbert Otto and John Mann (eds.) *Ways of Growth* (New York: Pocket Books, 1971).

¹²Maslow, *Farther Reaches*, pp. 41ff., 168ff., 199ff., 237ff., 269ff., 280ff., 343ff.

¹³O. Hobart Mowrer, "Is the Small-groups Movement a Religious Revolution?", *Pastoral Psychology* (January, 1972), 50.

¹⁴Maslow, *Religions*, p. 27; Otto and Mann, *Ways of Growth*, p. 200.

¹⁵Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966).

a catalogue of the new therapies and opens the doors of Pastoral Counseling to the incorporation of these new developments, while still seeking to maintain the distinctiveness of Pastoral Counseling. Thomas Oden¹⁶ and Don Browning¹⁷ simultaneously and independently constellated the issue. They voiced the sense then lurking on the perimeters of awareness: The secular counseling movement may be a locus of God's revelation¹⁸ and atonement¹⁹ and hence, may inform theology. The position up to this point had been that secular therapies might aid in the interpretation of a theological point, but that they could not actually inform theology. Both Browning and Oden challenge this position with their belief that God is revealing himself in secular psychotherapy. For both Browning and Oden, Rogerian therapy is normative, with an emphasis on the term "unconditional acceptance"²⁰ which is viewed as an extension of the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith. Oden achieves his conclusion on the basis of Barth's doctrine of analogy, while Browning analyzes three systems of atonement.

¹⁶Thomas Oden, *Kerygma and Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966; *Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

¹⁷Don Browning, *Atonement and Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

¹⁸Oden, *Kerygma*, p. 17, ". . . it is therefore possible by means of the analogy of faith to perceive Christologically the so-called secular counseling situation as the arena of God's self disclosure."

¹⁹Browning, *Atonement*, p. 17.

²⁰Rogers, *On Becoming*, p. 34.

The journal literature of the period increasingly expressed concern over the distinctiveness of Pastoral Counseling. A typical example is Jorjorian's article in *Pastoral Psychology*.²¹ In his discussion, the goal of Pastoral Counseling is "to make do" whereas the goal of psychotherapy is "to change." The term "pastoral intent" is developed as the distinguishing element, but as this is described it appears to be little more than a superficial theism and the unwillingness of the pastor to charge fees. This attempt to distinguish Pastoral Counseling from psychotherapy fails at the expense of Pastoral Counseling. What remains of Pastoral Counseling after the distinction has been drawn, is lacking in vitality. Failure to maintain a vigorous Pastoral Counseling movement, distinct from secular psychotherapy, is typical of the journal literature.²²

The full impact of the situation is first articulated by Lynwood Walker in his book, *Body and Soul*.²³ Walker argues that Gestalt Therapy is essentially a religious experience. He develops his argument on the basis of Gestalt Therapy's recovery of the unity of the body and the soul. This, Walker suggests, recaptures the Old Testament

²¹Armen D. Jorjorian, "Reflections Upon and Definitions of Pastoral Counseling," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXIII:224 (May 1972), 7.

²²Ernest Steair, "A Dramatic View of Pastoral Counseling," *Christian Advocate*, XVIII:9 (April 1973), 15; Floyd Jennings, "Private Pastoral Counselors Raise Troubling Issues," *Christian Advocate*, XVII:3 (February 1973); Francis Colborn, "Psychotherapy and Conversion," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CLXVII:2 (February 1973), 75.

²³James Lynwood Walker, *Body and Soul* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971).

view of man. Here, for the first time in Pastoral Counseling literature, organized religion is no longer appropriating psychotherapy, but therapy overtly is informing religion.²⁴

The question now becomes one of identity for the Pastoral Counseling movement, and by extension, for organized religion as a whole. Can organized religion in its Pastoral Counseling form remain so technologically dependent on secular psychotherapy and yet remain distinct from it? The question of the relationship between religion and psychology is even more fundamental, for if God is, as Oden, Browning and Walker suggest, making himself known in these secular forms, then what is the relationship of these forms of revelation to their traditional church counterparts?

Psychology's Movement Toward Religion

American psychology's attitude toward religion has been predominantly critical and descriptive; contenting itself with statistical and demographic descriptions of churchgoers²⁵ and with psychoanalytic descriptions of the "believing" personality.²⁶ The late 1960's

²⁴The exception to this statement is the work of C. G. Jung who has consistently maintained that the psychotherapeutic process is a religious process. Jung has, until recently remained well outside of the mainstream of academic psychology and is not considered for this reason in this study.

²⁵Ralph Mason Dreger, "Some Personality Correlates of Religious Attitudes as Determined by Projective Techniques" (Washington: American Psychological Association, 1952).

²⁶Heinz Hartmann, *Psychoanalysis and Moral Values* (New York: International Universities Press, 1960).

witnessed an increase of psychological interest in topics which have traditionally been religious. This trend is documented by the emergence and growth of the Association for Humanistic Psychology,²⁷ and a series of smaller professional organizations reflecting a felt need on the part of professional psychologists for organizations more appreciative of humanistic and religious issues than the traditional American psychological organizations have been.²⁸

In research, batteries of electronic and physiological tests and measurements are now being brought to bear on problems of awareness which have traditionally been within the realm of religion.²⁹ Such phrases as "altered states of awareness," "bio-feedback," "meditation" and "transpersonal psychology" are characteristic of serious research into the nature of human consciousness and its potential for expansion and alteration.

In psychotherapy, the "Third Force" of humanistic psychology

²⁷*The Journal of Humanistic Psychology* is published by the Association for Humanistic Psychology. It publishes the following statement of intent: "*The Journal of Humanistic Psychology* began publication in 1961 and is the journal of the Association for Humanistic Psychology. It is concerned with the publication of experiential reports, theoretical papers, research studies, application of humanistic psychology, and humanistic analysis of contemporary culture. Topics of special interest are authenticity, encounter, self-actualization, search for meaning, creativity, personal growth, psychological health, being-motivation, values, love, identity, and commitment."

²⁸Among these are the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, the Center for the Healing Arts, etc.

²⁹An excellent review of empirical research on awareness is Timothy J. Teyler (ed.) *Altered States of Awareness: Readings from Scientific American* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1972). See also Charles Tart, *Altered States of Consciousness* (New York: Wiley, 1969).

is developing an entire armamentarium of therapeutic options³⁰ which embrace the whole person and push the boundaries of human awareness and growth. More than just the cure of symptoms, these therapies emphasize growth, realization of the human potential, and exploration of experience and awareness. This change in emphasis is often referred to as a shift from the medical model of mental illness to a growth model of the therapeutic process.³¹

As psychotherapy has continued to become more growth or humanistically orientated, therapists have become increasingly aware of the relative poverty of their scientific orientation in symbols and metaphors with which to describe the process through which they are guiding their clients. The precise descriptive language of psychology has not been able to handle the subtle nuances and paradoxes of the inward journey.³²

To fill this need, humanistic psychology has turned either to religion directly³³ or to the eclectic new literature such as Robert

³⁰Otto and Mann, *Ways*.

³¹Clinebell, *Basic Types*, pp. 148ff.

³²Charles Tart, "States of Consciousness and State-specific Sciences," *Science*, CLXXVI (June 16, 1972), 1203; also Robert Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1972), especially chapters 1, 3, 8; Claudio Naranjo, *The One Quest* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); Maslow, *Farther Reaches*, introduction by Henry Geiger, p. xv.

³³*Psychology Today*, November 1974 published a survey of the religious attitudes of their readers. 40,000 readers responded, indicating that 83% show some religious interest or affiliation. A large group retained association with traditional denominations.

Ornstein's *The Psychology of Consciousness*,³⁴ or Ornstein and Naranjo's *On the Psychology of Meditation*.³⁵ Both of these works seem effortlessly to bring together such diverse traditions as Sufism, Buddhism, Tantric Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Christian mysticism, Hatha and Kundalini yogas, and the religion of the native Americans. While this amalgamation is enthusiastic, it is methodologically suspect to a theologian or a historian of religions.³⁶ In its urgency to develop a language adequate to its need, humanistic psychology seems in danger of softening the objectivity and descriptive precision of a psychological discipline.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The problem of the study is the relationship of impasse resolution as described in Gestalt Therapy to the religious process "right-wising" described in the theology of Paul. Comparative analysis of these two descriptions of human process show virtual identity in

³⁴Ornstein, *Consciousness*.

³⁵Claudio Naranjo and Robert Ornstein, *On the Psychology of Meditation* (New York: Viking Press, 1971).

³⁶The problem is the criterion which establishes a parallel. Work in history of religions and Biblical criticism has established clear standards and a tradition of scholarship. See Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969). Naranjo and Ornstein, in common with other "protopsychological" writers, do not have the control of the critical disciplines and their parallels between religions are not always clear. Their approach is appealing and promising, but is not adequately grounded in traditional critical scholarship.

form and attitude. Because the specific content of the processes differs quite strongly, the processes themselves may not be said to be identical. The problem of the study thus becomes to explicate the relationship between these two descriptions of process which are so similar in form and attitude and so different in content.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explicate and develop the Gestalt Therapy theory of impasse resolution, to demonstrate its existence clinically, and to investigate the claim that Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution is in fact a religious process of death and rebirth.

At a higher level of abstraction, the study also has an implicit and more general purpose which is to contribute to the discussion between science and religion.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study has primary importance in two areas: to Gestalt Therapy and to Pastoral Counseling as an applied arm of organized religion.

Importance to Gestalt Therapy

The study is important to Gestalt Therapy in two main ways: Theoretical clarification and therapeutic implications.

The theoretical importance of the study rests in the

clarification of the Gestalt Therapy theory of impasse resolution as process and in the integration of the theory of impasse resolution as process with the allied concepts of contact, boundary, and awareness.

The therapeutic implications of the study suggest an expansion of the therapist's own understanding of his/her faith position in Gestalt Therapy and open to him/her and the client a greater breadth and depth of experience in Gestalt Therapy. A therapist who understands the process of impasse resolution as a religious process of death and rebirth may be better able to aid the emerging growth of his clients.

Importance to Religion

The study contributes to religion in two primary ways: In the interpretation of religion as transforming process actually lived, and in increasing accessibility to a methodology compatible to religious intent.

When religion is viewed as process actually lived, as opposed to the content of dogma, then the daily lives of actual men and women become transparent to the activity of God in the world. In impasse resolution this becomes actual experience, rather than theological abstractions only. The focus of attention on process gives a common ground between the language of religion and the language of science.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology of this study is explorative and descriptive. It begins with the assertion that the process known as impasse-

resolution does in fact exist. This assertion is supported with a review of the literature of Gestalt Therapy and an analysis of three transcripts of Gestalt Therapy sessions chosen for their clear impasse resolution.

The study then undertakes to examine a similar process described in religious language, this is the process of "right-wising" as described in the theology of Paul.

Finally, the study compares these two descriptions of a process form against the assertion that they are descriptions of processes identical in form and attitude.

The Cases

The three cases cited demonstrate the existence of the phenomenon of impasse resolution and serve as descriptive illustrations of that process.

The cases are all transcripts of audio-taped sessions in ongoing Gestalt Therapy drawn from the work of a single therapist. The sessions occurred between January, 1974 and January, 1975.³⁷

³⁷The sampling of the work of a single therapist is admissible given that the transcripts function only to demonstrate that the process does exist. Other examples of impasse work in Gestalt Therapy have been published. See Frederick Solomon Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1969); *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy* (Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1973); Jack Downing and Robert Marmorstein, *Dreams and Nightmares* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Joen Fagan, "Three Sessions with Iris," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 33; James Simkin, "Mary: Sessions with a Passive Patient," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 162.

Selection of cases. The transcripts are selected as examples of successful impasse work. They are experiences of varying depth and intensity, with a variety of clients. Each transcript is preceded by a brief description of the client.

Format of presentation. The format of transcripts with comment interspersed, is suggested by Joen Fagan in her article "Three Sessions with Iris."³⁸ In the process of transcription from the audio tapes slight changes were made to preserve clarity. These include the omission of repetitive "ahs" and "uhs." Material not relevant to the process of impasse resolution which occurred at the beginning or end of the session was omitted. These omissions are noted by brackets in the transcripts. This slight editing is justified by the intent of the study and the function of the transcripts which is to demonstrate the existence of the process of impasse resolution and to illustrate its structure.

Analysis

The analysis of the cases and the comparison of Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution and religious process is made on the basis of structure rather than content. This technique has precedent in the field of Biblical and literary criticism under the name of "Form Criticism," and in the anthropological work of Claude Levi-Strauss

³⁸Joen Fagan, "Three Sessions with Iris," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 42.

under the name "Structuralism."

In application to a psychotherapy session, this technique must be modified to respond to structure and process dynamically moving through time rather than a structure which remains relatively unchanging and static in time, such as literature or myth. For this reason, the concept of process as movement with direction, or trajectory is applied.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are used in this study with special emphasis and specific meaning.

Process

The use of the term "process" in this study must be distinguished from the more formal use in the context of Process Philosophy and Process Theology. The term, as it is used here, does not refer to these schools of thought, although their influence in the development of the theory of Gestalt Therapy is noticeable. Rather, the use of the term here follows from the distinction developed in Gestalt Therapy between process and content. While this distinction is elusive, it is central to the theory and practice of Gestalt Therapy and is important to the conclusions of this study.

Like so many of the terms and concepts in the literature of Gestalt Therapy, process is not consistently or clearly defined. A Gestalt Therapist may speak of process as the verbs while content is

the nouns, or of process as the music and content as the notes or lyrics. Or the therapist might speak of process as a mathematical function, a relationship of two variables such that a change in one predicts the change in the other. In this analogy, the specific values of the variables is the content, their relationship is the process.

Generally, and for our present purposes, process refers to the dynamic structuring of experience, the forming and dissolving of *Gestalten*, the meanings by which we live. In the formation of a gestalt a meaning emerges which was not there before, a new whole which is larger than the sum of its parts. The simplest and clearest illustrations of gestalt formation and the distinction of process and content come from the study of perception. The gestalt "circle" may be formed using a variety of content, for example a circle of stones, a circle of trees, or a circle of people. In this illustration, the process is the formation of a circle, a whole of meaning, while the content is the specific things with which the circle is formed. In one sense of meaning, the formation of a circle is not dependent upon specific content. A circle remains a circle even if it is a circle of stones or of flowers.

In a larger sense of meaning, process and content may not be separated and the meaning of the circle is dependent upon its specific content. A circle of enemy guns has quite a different meaning than a circle of friendly hands. The willingness of the Gestalt Therapist to sharply draw the distinction of process and content is based in the

clinical effectiveness of the distinction rather than its philosophical viability. The distinction is not intended to be carried out to a metaphysical level. Acceptance of the distinction allows enormous clinical leverage and gives a powerful therapeutic tool. The emphasis upon process gives the Gestalt Therapist a peculiarly effective perspective.

There are clinical situations in which attention to content alone does not grant access to the behavioral whole. Take an example of a young man speaking in a therapy situation about how much he loves his mother. As he speaks his teeth are tightly clenched, his hand is balled into a fist and is slowly hitting the arm of the chair. The therapist who attends only to the content of the words is left with the impression of simple love. The therapist who attends to the body language is left with the need to interpret the meaning of the teeth and fist. But the process perspective asks for the unifying gestalt. The process oriented therapist notices that the process is fragmented into two "mini-processes" which apparently contradict each other. The "mini-process" of talking has the content of "I love my mother." The "mini-process" of body language has the content of clenched teeth and balled fist. The therapist might observe the apparent disparity with a comment such as "I notice that when you talk of loving your mother you clench your teeth and hit your fist." Directing his attention to this disparity, the client might well discover resentment toward the mother as well as the feelings verbalized.

In this sense process is a therapeutic vantage point which

.....

looks for the whole of meaning in actual behavior. Process is what an individual actually does in its wholeness as opposed to its specifics. Process is the dance, content the steps. Process is a painter's style, the content the subject matter and pigments with which a specific picture is painted. Process is the "how" of experience, content the "what."³⁹

At the highest level of abstraction, the fundamental process with which Gestalt Therapy is concerned is awareness. Awareness is the specific process in which the fragmentation of daily existence is overcome, transcended by *Gestalten* of increasing complexity and by larger wholes of meaning.⁴⁰ In awareness in human experience content and process are harmonized, the "mini-processes" are integrated into a smoothly flowing whole of cognitive and motor behavior.

As used in this study, process refers to a whole of meaning. It implies actual behavior, either motor or sensory/cognitive. As awareness, process implies a direction toward greater complexity and greater integration.

Religious Process

The process point of view may be applied to religion as well as to psychotherapy. In the Christian tradition a central image for one religious process is Paul's "right-wising" or "death and re-birth

³⁹Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 25.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 24.

in Christ." When this image is espoused as doctrine it tends toward the content side of the distinction. When it is a process actually lived by an individual, it tends toward the process side of the distinction.

Since the time of the apostles, men have debated the meaning of death and resurrection, both as event and as process. Paul is the first to elevate the questions inherent in this image to the level of theological reflection. It is in an investigation of Paul's thought that the parallel between Gestalt awareness and this particular understanding of religious process may be seen most clearly.

For Paul, the religious process is a movement from a way of being (walking) prior to faith to a way of being under faith. This is reflected in Paul's terminology, "walk according to the flesh" and "walk according to the spirit." The dilemma of man prior to faith is the fragmentation of his existence. Paul finds the answer to this dilemma in the individual's surrendering himself to "die and be reborn in Christ."

The term "religious process" is not intended to imply the view that there is a single religious process which is characteristic for all religions at all moments in history. Rather, it refers to Paul's view of the process of "right-wising," or death and resurrection as one among several "religious processes."

Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt Therapy refers to a school of psychotherapy developed

by Frederick S. Perls and his followers. While Gestalt Therapy incorporates many fundamental principles of Gestalt Psychology, it must be distinguished from Gestalt Psychology which is a branch of academic experimental psychology which studies perception and cognition.

Gestalt Therapy may be viewed as a practical integration of several strands of psychology and philosophy. Primary among these are phenomenology, existentialism, gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, and process philosophy.⁴¹ In this study, the theory of Gestalt Therapy is approached with particular emphasis on process issues. Perls has stressed the importance of a process approach, but his own theoretical work in this regard was incomplete and inconsistent at the time of his death. Several theoretical reconsiderations are proposed in this study where process categories appear to have been incompletely applied.

Impasse and Impasse Resolution

When, in a therapeutic environment, an alienated aspect of the personality threatens to emerge into awareness, it holds the promise of a new integration and wholeness of personality, but it also holds the threat of destroying the familiar sense of identity. This point in any therapeutic interaction is the "stuck point," or impasse. Impasse is experienced phenomenologically as confusion,

⁴¹R. Dugald Stewart, "The Philosophical Background of Gestalt Therapy," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 13.

blankness, often accompanied by humiliation, shame and a fear of death or exposure.⁴²

The resolution of impasse in Gestalt Therapy theory is described in terms of the theory of paradoxical change,⁴³ which holds that the impasse cannot be resolved by an act of will. When the personality wills itself to change, it treats itself as an object of its own manipulation and perpetuates its own fragmentation. The specific content may be integrated by this action, but the underlying process of self-fragmentation continues. According to the theory of paradoxical change, when the personality is willing to be what and where it is, and to enter into this experience, then integration becomes a possibility. A complete review of this issue in Gestalt Therapy literature is undertaken in Chapter 2.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study fall into two major areas: Limitations imposed by the definition of religious process, and limitations imposed by the emphasis on process as opposed to content.

Limitations Imposed by the Definition of Religious Process

Religious process, as defined in this study, must not be taken

⁴²Frederick Perls, "Four Lectures," in Fagan and Shepherd, *Gestalt Therapy Now*, pp. 18ff.

⁴³Arnold Beiser, "The Paradoxical Theory of Change," in Fagan and Shepherd, *Gestalt Therapy Now*, p. 77.

to be inclusive. The definition is not intended to include all possible religious processes, or to describe a religious process characteristic of all religions at all points in history. It does claim to represent one religious process which has been influential in the development of religious thought and practice in the Western world. Religious process as developed in the East and in other cultures is outside the scope of this study.

The use of Tillich's definition of religion as "being grasped by an ultimate concern" imposes a limitation on the study. The implicit question is the appropriateness of approaching religion as process as opposed to identifying it with specific content. This issue is considered further in the Implications section of Chapter 5 with reference to the Gestalt Therapy criticism of Paul. For the purposes of this study, religion is approached primarily as process.

The approach to Paul in this study is made through the work of Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann is selected for two reasons: Paul's thought is strange to contemporary minds and requires interpretation. Bultmann and the school of criticism which he founded is the most influential in contemporary Biblical studies. Secondly, his work is based on a highly detailed and scientific analysis of Paul's material and relevant historical data.

By approaching Paul through Bultmann's interpretation, we may speak of Paul only insofar as Bultmann accurately reflects him. The study takes on itself any error and limitation inherent in Bultmann's interpretation. In view of his pre-eminent role in the community of

New Testament scholarship, this risk seems justified when compared with the clarity and understandability he gives to Paul.

An additional area of concern is that Bultmann's thought is greatly influenced by existentialism, and so is the theory of Gestalt Therapy. The problem which this presents is one of assessing how much of any observed similarity between the two variables might be attributed to actual similarity and how much is an artifact of the common influence of existentialism. This question is considered further in the development of conclusions in Chapter 5.

Another limitation imposed on the study by the definition of religious process is the emphasis given in the interpretation of Paul to his anthropological categories. This is justified in part by Paul's own intent and method.⁴⁴ However, for the purposes of this study, when we speak of religious process in Paul, we refer primarily to the dimension of actual human experience as opposed to future eschatological expectation. Further justification for this emphasis is presented in Chapter 5.

Limitations of Process Analysis

The methodology of process analysis delimits the conclusions which may be drawn. Given this methodological approach, it may be possible to depict Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution and religious process, as reflected in the theology of Paul, as sharing a common

⁴⁴Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 190.

process. This may be taken to imply that impasse resolution is religious process only to the extent that one is willing to view religion as process independent of specific content.

The position of this study is that religion may be so viewed, and that such an approach is justified. Consequently, the study may not claim any necessary similarity between the content of Gestalt Therapy and religious process.

Limitations of Impasse Resolution

The focus of this study upon impasse resolution in Gestalt Therapy must not be taken to be fully representative of Gestalt Therapy theory as a whole. Impasse resolution is of particular relevance to the theory of neurosis, while much of Gestalt Therapy theory is concerned with the integration of normal psychology with abnormal psychology.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The remainder of the study is presented in four chapters. These include: Impasse Resolution as Process in Gestalt Therapy, Impasse Resolution in Three Transcripts, The Theology of Paul as Religious Process, and Implications and Conclusions.

Impasse Resolution as Process in Gestalt Therapy

The intent of the chapter is to review the literature of Gestalt Therapy in order to define and describe impasse resolution

as a process of death and rebirth. The review of the literature is undertaken from the stance that Gestalt Therapy theory offers a process approach to therapy. Corrective suggestions are made at points where the theory seems to describe substantive rather than process categories.

Impasse Resolution in Three Transcripts

This chapter presents three transcripts and analysis of the cases. The cases are selected as examples of successful impasse resolution. They function in the study as evidence of the existence of the process of impasse resolution, and as illustrations of that process.

The analysis is undertaken in terms of Gestalt Therapy process and in terms of the religious image of death and rebirth.

Theology of Paul as Religious Process

The theology of Paul as interpreted by Bultmann is presented in this chapter as a description of a religious process. This process is described by Paul as "death and rebirth anew in Christ."

Implications and Conclusions

In this final chapter, the study is summarized and the implications and conclusions drawn. This includes suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

IMPASSE RESOLUTION AS PROCESS IN GESTALT THERAPY:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

. . . when a person runs right head-on into the impasse his rational self is jammed. In the unconscious opposites exist rather comfortably; in the conscious they jam the computer. Gestalt therapy in one sense is just getting people into their impasse solidly, then encouraging them to stay there until the impasse vanishes as if by a miracle. I asked Fritz Perls to explain impasse resolution. He replied, 'I don't know what happens, unless you call it God's mercy.' That was the only time I ever heard Fritz speak of God with any acknowledgment or reverence.¹

The phenomenon of impasse is commonplace in psychotherapy of all disciplines, and in daily life, although often it is unrecognized. It is so familiar as to be virtually overlooked, lost to awareness among all things which are obvious. Yet it is crucial. It seems to stand between neurosis and health like the mythical abyss. To stand at impasse, to "get into it" is extremely uncomfortable. Impasse is associated with phobic avoidance and the threat of death.² But since it functions to maintain the status quo, it must be endured if any growth or change is to take place.³

¹Jack Downing and Robert Marmorstein, *Dreams and Nightmares* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 88.

²Frederick Perls, "Four Lectures," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 22.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 20, 25.

The process of impasse resolution is the process of the healing of neurosis and the emergence of health. In that it involves the dissolution of one mode of functioning and the beginning of a new mode, it is a process of death and rebirth. In impasse resolution, the neurotic "I," burdened with fragmentation and self-alienation, with depression, anxiety, and a diminished sense of the actual, is surrendered; allowed to die, that a new self, more wholesome and alive might emerge.

The description of impasse and the development of a methodology which facilitates its resolution are far-reaching contributions of Gestalt Therapy. Perls has claimed that Gestalt Therapy is the only therapy to have worked successfully with the impasse.⁴ Regardless of whether or not this claim is valid, the Gestalt Therapy approach to impasse work remains a significant contribution.⁵

The purpose of the present chapter is to develop a clear statement of the Gestalt Therapy theory of impasse and its resolution. It is, however, a peculiarity of the literature of Gestalt Therapy that it is often inconsistent and incomplete. Gestalt Therapy has been characterized as a "practical philosophy."⁶ This characterization

⁴Frederick Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1969), p. 28.

⁵Harold Stone, "Symbolic and Expressive Modes in Psychotherapy," (Los Angeles: Center for the Healing Arts, 1973), mimeographed, p. 4.

⁶R. Dugald Stewart, "The Philosophical Background of Gestalt Therapy," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 13.

captures the vacillation in the theory of Gestalt Therapy between clear clinical constructs and relatively vague philosophical speculation. The general confusion which results from this vacillation is augmented by Perls' penchant for extemporaneous formulations of concepts and showmanship reductionism. Gestalt Therapy theory is part philosophy, part psychology, and part showmanship. Clarity and consistency have suffered.

To meet the intent of this chapter, it is necessary to reformulate and harmonize elements of the theory. This is undertaken in six sections. The first section is a statement of the relevant ontological assumptions which underlie the theory. No attempt is made to be complete and the section is limited to those assumptions which are critical for the discussion in the remainder of the chapter. The second section is a review and critique of Perls' theory of the layers of neurosis. This theory is a product of his later years and served the purpose of quickly and efficiently outlining some important elements of Gestalt work in workshop lectures. It is reviewed here as a prelude to the major discussion and for the purpose of demonstrating the relevance of the notion of process to the theory of impasse resolution. The third section of the chapter is entitled: "Gestalt Therapy Theory of Neurosis: Or Personality Functioning Prior to Impasse-Resolution." This section attempts to review the literature and to formulate a statement of the theory of neurosis in Gestalt Therapy. The fourth section considers the process of impasse resolution and the Gestalt Therapy theory of growth. The fifth

section describes the theory of healthy personality functioning presented in the literature. The final section summarizes the chapter.

SOME ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Insofar as Gestalt Therapy attempts to describe the human personality in its relationship to the world, it makes certain assumptions about the nature of the world and the functioning of the human personality.

Gestalt Psychology and the Nature of Existence

It may be taken as a given of our experience that human awareness makes a distinction between the "I" and the "not-I." A variety of philosophical systems have attempted to explain the relationship of the "I" and the "not-I" in terms of a duality between the "I" and the world, or between the "I" and the body. Freud's observations with reference to the content of the "I" has led to an additional cleavage between the conscious and the unconscious.

In contrast to these dualisms, Gestalt Therapy follows the holism of Gestalt psychology in affirming the essential unity of the individual and the world (the organism/environment field)⁷ and the

⁷Frederick Perls, Paul Goodman, and Ralph E. Hefferline, *Gestalt Therapy* (New York: Dell, 1951), p. 73. ". . . you and your environment are not independent entities, but together you constitute a functioning, mutually influencing, total system."

unity of the body and the mind or soul.⁸

Holism. Holism is an orientation toward experience which requires that an observation remain integrated with its context.

If we think wholistically, we know that any whole we examine is tied to the rest of the multi-variat universe. As a consequence, when we study processes, we must study their contexts, or we shall leave something out.⁹

In *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression*, Perls discusses the place of holism in Gestalt Therapy and its relationship to Freud.¹⁰ His objection to Freud is that Freud's "association psychology" is too reductionistic, giving too much emphasis to the content of the material and too little to the intrinsic processes. The result of Freud's emphasis is a fragmenting view of the human personality. He loses sight of the "wholes" or *gestalten* of the personality. Perls defines *gestalten* here by quoting Wertheimer: "There are wholes, the behavior of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole."¹¹ Perls makes the distinction between wholes of the personality and "holoids," ". . . if the human personality is a whole, we can call complexes and patterns of repetition holoids . . ."¹² It

⁸Lynwood Walker, *Body and Soul* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 23ff.

⁹Joel Latner, *The Gestalt Therapy Book* (New York: Julian Press, 1973), p. 8.

¹⁰Frederick Perls, *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 27.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

is not, however, permissible to examine the function of the holoids of the personality without reference to the whole in which they occur, without reference to the economy of the entire personality. It is the whole, the gestalt of the personality, rather than the specific parts, that Perls attends to.

In later formulations this whole came under the influence of field theory and was enlarged to include the unity of the environment/organismic field.¹³

Gestalt Formation. Gestalt Therapy has borrowed another ontological assumption from Gestalt psychology. The basic units of existence or wholes of experience are *Gestalten*. A gestalt is a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.¹⁴ It is a whole which defines itself by its relationship with itself, its inner cohesiveness. In this sense, the human personality is a whole, a gestalt which is greater than the sum of its parts. The parts themselves may be *Gestalten* of a lower order, or "holoids." The analogy of the human body serves to clarify. A cell is a unit of the body; it is a gestalt in itself, a whole. As it relates to other cells, however, a new and more complex gestalt emerges which is an organ, say the liver. The liver is a gestalt, a whole. It has an identity which is greater than the sum of the cells of which it is composed. The organs in turn

¹³Perls, et al., *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 255ff.

¹⁴Patricia Emerson and Edward Smith, "Contributions of Gestalt Psychology to Gestalt Therapy," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 9.

relate to each other and the new gestalt of body emerges. Body in its turn is a unity which is larger than the sum of its parts.

These wholes are not static. The usual English translation of the German "gestalt" is "configuration." The inadequacy of this translation is that it does not capture the sense of process inherent in the German term. Gestalt formation refers to a constant shifting of the unity of the field, a forming of a gestalt and the destruction of that gestalt to make room for the next emerging gestalt.

Through awareness, the unity of the field is differentiated into a gestalt of "figure" and "ground" in a relationship of contrast. The figure captures attention while the ground remains dark and unnoticed. Awareness is a constant shifting of *gestalten*, emerging figures and receding figures. The interplay of the figure and the ground is gestalt. It is process and not a thing.

The concept of gestalt formation as process is crucial for the theory of Gestalt Therapy since it provides the basis for the distinction between process and content.¹⁵ The formation of a gestalt, for example a circle, may be done with a wide variety of content--a circle of trees, of people, or stones. This process remains constant --forming a circle.

Perls' discovery of gestalt psychology gave him a way of speaking about process which was less constrained by the content orientation of language than the alternative philosophies.¹⁶ Gestalt

¹⁵*Ibid.* Also, Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 15.

¹⁶Frederick Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail* (Lafayette, CA:

formation also provides an independent criterion of healthy functioning, a criterion which is relatively culture free. The ability to form a clear figure is a sign of health, while the inability to do so is a symptom of dysfunction.

Contact Boundary. Although the theory of Gestalt Therapy views entities as *gestalten*, intrinsically self-related, it also speaks of the boundary between things. In fact, Perls says that a boundary defines a thing.¹⁷

From a process perspective, the boundary formulation is unfortunate. However, even in its most reified formulation, boundary retains a process character. It defines a function rather than a thing. Boundary is the locus of experience. All experience arises "in" the boundary between the organism and the environment, or between the organism and itself.¹⁸

Preferably, emphasis should be placed on contact as a function rather than on boundary as a thing. The Polsters make such an emphasis in a discussion of contact in their book *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*.¹⁹ They treat contact boundary as a generic concept. In their discussion, contact-boundary retains its process character.

Real People Press, 1969), p. 64. Note: This edition does not have pagination. The pagination is added numbering the title page 1.

¹⁷Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 7.

¹⁸Perls, et al., *Gestalt Therapy*, p. 258.

¹⁹Erving and Miriam Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1973).

It describes an interaction of "I" and the "not-I." It is the function which mediates the polarity of total union and total alienation. Contact is the function through which togetherness and separateness are simultaneous possibilities.

Since our umbilicalectomy, each of us has become separate beings, seeking union with that which is other than ourselves. Never again can we return to the original symbiotic paradise; our sense of union depends paradoxically on a heightened sense of separateness and it is the paradox which we constantly seek to resolve. The function which synthesizes the need for union and for separation is contact. Through contact, each person has the chance to meet the world outside himself nourishingly. . . . Contact is not just togetherness or joining. It can only happen between separate beings, always requiring independence and always risking capture in the union. At the moment of union, one's fullest sense of his person is swept along into a new creation . . . Unless I am experienced in knowing full contact, when I meet you full-eyed, full-bodied, and full-minded, you may become irresistible and engulfing. In contacting you, I wager my independent existence, but only through the contact function can the realization of our identities fully develop.²⁰

In the Polsters' discussion, the "I-boundary" becomes a system of a "whole range" of contact boundaries.

A person's I-boundary is the boundary of what for him is permissible contactfulness. It is composed of a whole *range* of contact boundaries and defines those actions, ideas, people, values, settings, images, memories, and so on in which he is willing and competitively free to engage fully with both the world outside himself and the reverberations within himself that this engagement might awaken. It includes also the sense of what risks he is willing to take, where the opportunities for personal enhancement are great but where the consequences may bring on new personal requirements which he may or may not be up to . . .

Within the I-boundary contact may be made with ease and grace and it results in a comfortable sense of gratification and growth . . . At the I-boundary contact becomes more risky and the likelihood of gratification less certain . . . Outside the I-boundary, without great extension, contact is well nigh impossible.²¹

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 99.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 108.

They proceed to describe the experience of the I-boundary from several vantage points including body-boundaries, value-boundaries, familiarity-boundaries, expressive-boundaries, and exposure-boundaries.²²

In this formulation, parts of the organism, potential experiences, may lay outside of the I-boundary, they may be alienated from the I. In this situation, they are experienced by the I as "other," as foreign.

Contact Functions

Contact is the function of touching, tasting, looking, smelling, hearing, moving.²³ It allows the identification of what is nourishing and what is toxic, both physically and psychologically.²⁴ The ability of the organism to grow is based on a healthy balance of assimilation and elimination.

Assimilation as a contact function is differentiated from *introjection*.²⁵ Assimilation is a taking in and making one's own as in digestion of food. In efficient digestion, the food is chewed, and "destructured." The individual atoms are incorporated into the organism. The gestalt of the original food no longer exists, but has

²²*Ibid.*, p. 115.

²³Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 227ff.

²⁴Jerry Greenwald, "The Art of Emotional Nourishment," unpublished manuscript; "Nourishing and Toxic Encounter Groups," *Voices*, VIII:2 (Summer 1972), 30.

²⁵Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 189ff.

become incorporated into the structure of the organism.²⁶ In the process of introjection, on the other hand, the introject is taken in, but is not made an intrinsic part of the organism. On a physical level, an example is a splinter of wood or a bullet in an injured soldier. These may be carried about in the body for years, but are never assimilated. On a psychological level, introjection is of great importance in the development of the "as if" person. The "as if" person introjects values and ideals from parents and society which are never owned, never intrinsically integrated into the personality. They remain psychologically foreign objects in the personality. These introjects form the criteria of what the individual "should" or "should not" do or be. They form the limits of "permissible contact-fullness." When an individual identifies with the introjects, as the neurotic habitually does, he/she acts "as if" he/she were the introject as opposed to how he/she actually is. A value which has been assimilated into the personality appears in awareness as a "want." An introject appears as a "should."

Healthy contact in elimination is distinguished from its distortion of *retroflexion*. In retroflexion, toxic material is excreted by the system, but it is not cleared from the system.²⁷ On a physical level this is evidenced by illnesses like uremia where the body poisons itself attempting to rid itself of toxin. Psychologically, the retroflexing person does to him/herself what he/she

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 190.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 146ff.

intended to do to someone else.²⁸ An example would be someone "biting their tongue" to keep from making a "biting" remark to someone else.

The contact function must be distinguished from *confluence*. In confluence there is no clear distinction between self and other, between organism and environment. Rather there is a merging, a fusion. Confluence has been defined as the "appreciation of sameness."²⁹ However this definition does not seem quite accurate since appreciation implies a differentiation between the appreciator and the appreciated. In true confluence there is no differentiation. Contact maintains individual identity, while at the same time maintaining full encounter.

Contact function must also be distinguished from alienation. In alienation, individuality is stressed to a point where touching is no longer a possibility. The neurotic typically is either habitually confluent and fears alienation as a function of the separation demanded by contact, or he/she is habitually alienated, fearing the union demanded by contact.³⁰

Finally, contact function must be distinguished from projection. The projecting individual believes that he/she is contacting the environment, but in actuality is contacting him/herself. Contact is

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Latner, *Gestalt Therapy Book*, p. 83.

³⁰Robert W. Resnick, Remarks to the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Los Angeles, January 19, 1975.

there, but it is distorted.³¹

There is nothing pathological *per se* in any of the distortions of contact. In fact, each serves a useful function. Confluence is the ground of empathy. Introjection is an important stage in learning. Projection functions essentially in artistic endeavor. Retroflection is the ground of choice and control. But when these distortions function habitually as an avoidance of contact, they constitute neurotic functioning.³² The neurotic functions habitually with diminished contact and his/her ability to nourish and to avoid toxicity is impaired.

The Now

The neurotic also avoids contact by avoiding the Now. In Gestalt Therapy only the Now is actual.³³ It is only in the Now that contact can occur, and it is only in the Now that an individual has the immediate power to choose.³⁴ The past is no more, the future is not yet. The individual cannot change the past, nor can he/she guarantee the future. The attempt to do so is an avoidance of the possibilities of contact which are actual in the present. Past is present in the Now as memory, a present activity, "I am remembering."

³¹Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 211ff.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 264.

³³Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 14.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

The future is also present in the Now as anticipation, "I am anticipating." The Polsters point out that a view of the present in which only the actually present is taken to be real is "stultifying."³⁵

A consideration of the past and the future must be a part of the psychological field in which any choice is made. But the paradox of the past and the future resides in the problem of living *as if* one were in the past or in the future. In this situation, the power of choice is diminished and "the lively possibilities of existence are polluted."³⁶ In the Polsters' discussion, being in the present, in the now, becomes "presence." The quality of "presence" reflects an integrated experiencing of the immediate environment. "Presence" is being here and now. It implies an integration of thought, sensation, mind and body. "Presence" is participation in the "is-ness" of being.

Ego Functions and the Organism

In order to explain the subjective phenomenon of the "I" as differentiated from the "not-I" without introducing a dualism, Gestalt Therapy speaks of "ego functions." The functions of the ego are identification and alienation.³⁷ As figure forms in awareness, the ego functions either identify with figure or alienate it. Ego serves the function of sorting the forming figures into the "I" and the

³⁵Polster and Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*, pp. 7ff.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 225ff. Also, Perls, *In and out the Garbage Pail*, p. 259.

"not-I."

The total gestalt of the personality is referred to as the organism. Organism is the unity of the body and the mind, the biological and the psychological. The term must be understood to include the emotional and cognitive dimensions of human existence.³⁸

In neurosis, the unity of the organism becomes threatened by habitual patterns of identification and alienation. The ego functions develop a relatively rigid system of identification and alienation so that certain emerging figures are habitually alienated and others are habitually identified with. This system of identification and alienation may not accurately reflect the actual unity of the organism, but may exclude as "other" parts of the self, and include as "I" figures which are actually foreign.

Polarities

One final assumption which is of importance for our study is the polar nature of existence. Gestalt Therapy, borrowing from Sigmund Friedlander among others,³⁹ holds that existence tends to differentiate into opposites. "Everything which is, tends to differentiate into opposites."⁴⁰ For every experience of up, there is a matching experience of down. The pairs of opposites form polarities,

³⁸Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 275ff.

³⁹Perls, *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*, pp. 13ff.

⁴⁰Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 76.

each pole of the pair having a tendency to become its opposite. In neurosis, the opposites often become fragmented, losing a free flowing interaction with the opposing partner. When the two elements are balanced, the theory speaks of the fertile void; which is not the void of emptiness, but the void of perfect balance where experience can easily move in either direction.

In terms of gestalt formation, the polarities of existence are manifest when one element of the polarity becomes differentiated as "figure" while the opposite remains buried in the ground.⁴¹ In awareness, the "I" identifies with one and alienates the other. In neurosis this identification with one and alienation of the opposite becomes habitual and unaware. The task of growth, becomes the resolution of the polar antinomies. This is accomplished by the formation of a gestalt of sufficient complexity so that the differentiation of figure from ground is accomplished without introducing a split. This new gestalt is not merely the sum of the two poles, but is a new entity.

In awareness, the "I" identifies with the integration, and with the balancing interaction of the polarity. It comes to understand itself, not just as identified with one pole or the other, but as identified with the process through which the poles are balanced. "I" is both poles and it is the integrator.

⁴¹Polster and Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*, p. 61.

THE LAYERS OF NEUROSIS: A CRITIQUE

The discussion of impasse in the literature occurs primarily within the context of Perls' rather problematic theory of the layers of the neurosis. In this formulation, the impasse is considered to be one of the layers of the neurosis. The formulation of impasse as a layer of the personality is strongly in tension with the process description of impasse work elsewhere in the literature. It is clear that Perls himself was uneasy about the theory of layers of neurosis even though he continued to use it into his last years. In reference to this theory he writes, "If I categorize in this way and make a thing out of a process, please be tolerant and see that this is just an approximation of what the process is like."⁴²

In this formulation the neurosis is divided into five (sometimes six) layers of which the impasse is one. It is typical of Perls' work that the five layers are different in different parts of the literature, and it is unclear whether these variations reflect a development in his thought, or if they are reflections of a change in mood or a lapse of memory. The most comprehensive formulations occur in "Four Lectures" reprinted in *Gestalt Therapy Now*⁴³ and in *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*.⁴⁴ In the "Four Lectures" formulation the layers are: the phoney, the phobic, the impasse, the implosive, and the

⁴²Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 24.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁴Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, pp. 55ff.

explosive.⁴⁵

The cliché layer describes ritualistic behavior such as the relatively formalized patterns of greeting; "Hello, how are you?", etc. This is the most superficial and ritualistic mode of human verbal interaction.

The phoney layer is a role playing layer. Perls identifies this with Helene Deutsch's description of the "as if" person.⁴⁶ In this mode of functioning people attempt to actualize images or ideals --they live "as if" they were someone or something else. There is a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction with what a person *is* and an effort is made to hide the actuality of the present and to act "as if" the individual were different. This is distinguished from authentic growth or self-actualization in that there is a denial or covering of the actual self and a pretense of being the ideal self. This pretense is a self-manipulation as opposed to an "allowing-to-become." Those aspects of the self which do not fit the ideal are alienated from awareness and the "I" identifies with the ideal. If a person is afraid, he/she might deny the fear and act "as if" he/she were brave, etc.

The second (or third) layer of the neurosis is the phobic layer. The basic phobia that Perls notes is the fear of life.⁴⁷

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*; also Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 20.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*; also "Four Lectures," p. 23.

Fear of life is fear of growth, change, and by implication, the unknown. It is fear to be "what one is," to reown the actual whole; to include within one's sense of "I" those portions conventionally disowned. The phobia appears as a "catastrophic expectation" that if the authentic self is revealed behind the "as if" image of self, the real self will be rejected or shamed. Because of this phobic attitude, every attempt is made to preserve the phoney "as if" layer intact.

However, if an individual is able to penetrate the phobic layer, he/she enters the third layer, the impasse. In the impasse "there is the feeling of being not alive, of deadness."⁴⁸ It engenders the feeling of being stuck, helpless, humiliated and shamed. "The impasse occurs everytime you are not ready or willing to use your own resources (including your eyes) and when environmental support is not forthcoming."⁴⁹ This can be translated into the language of the "as if" layer by saying that the impasse occurs every time the individual is not willing to use the support of the authentic or actual self and the environment is not supporting the "as if" self-image. In order for the "as if" image to be functional, it must be supported by environmental factors, often social canon and cultural norms.

The fourth layer of the neurosis is the implosive layer. This layer is encountered by the individual willing to enter into the impasse, to experience the phobia and to persevere. Perls refers to the implosive layer as the "death layer." He notes that it is not to

⁴⁸Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 22.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 25.

be confused with Freud's "death wish."⁵⁰ It is rather a process of self-compression. The death he describes is the death of immobilization. It is the death of taking movement out of process, making processes into things.⁵¹ It is a non-caring, non-feeling withdrawal.

If this implosive layer is endured, the fifth or explosive layer is achieved. Here, the authentic self explodes into visibility and expression. Perls mentions four basic types of explosion: grief, anger, joy and orgasm. In these four explosions of the fifth layer, the "corpse explodes into life." The death of the fourth layer is left for the expressive liveliness of the authentic existence.

The image underlying the theory of the layers of the neurosis is of a journey through the layers toward the authentic self. The tension in this formulation is clear. On the one hand, the concepts of layer and authentic self are substantive, and on the other hand, the sense of movement and metamorphosis is process oriented.

The value of this formulation is its simplicity and strong imagery. Its shortcoming is the distortion of the process orientation. In addition, it does not take into account other fundamental principles of Gestalt Therapy theory such as contact, boundary, ego function, and awareness. It is not in conflict with them, but simply is not well integrated with them. It is as if this formulation were separate from the body of Gestalt theory.

An understanding of neurosis and health and of the relationship

⁵⁰Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 154.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

between them is pivotal for Gestalt Therapy. In this chapter the term "impasse resolution" is proposed to refer to the process by which neurotic existence is transformed into healthful existence. When related to the body of Gestalt Therapy theory, this process emerges as a clear statement of a clinical process of psychotherapy and as a statement of the human existential situation.

GESTALT THERAPY THEORY OF NEUROSIS: PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING PRIOR TO IMPASSE RESOLUTION

Perls believed that the neurotic mode of living is normative for our society. The situation of the contemporary person is one of lifelessness, constriction, effortful striving, in short, existential death.

Modern man lives in a state of low-grade vitality. Though generally he does not suffer deeply, he knows little of true creative living. Instead of it, he has become an anxious automaton. His world offers him vast opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment, and yet he wanders around aimlessly, not really knowing what he wants and completely unable, therefore, to figure out how to get it. He does not approach the adventure of living with either excitement or zest . . . He seems to have lost all spontaneity, all capacity to feel and express directly and creatively. He is very good at talking about his troubles and very bad at coping with them . . .⁵²

The movement from neurotic living to healthy living is a movement from lifelessness to liveliness. It is a process through which a person claims authentic life. But to make such a transition,

⁵²Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 32.

an individual must be willing to enter the impasse and to stay there until "the impasse vanishes as if by a miracle." The experience of the impasse is painful. To stay there is to experience deadness with intensity. In the self-investment at the impasse, the individual experiences awareness of death, and the death he/she dies there is death to neurotic deadness;⁵³ neurotic lifelessness is released and the individual emerges into explosive self-expressiveness; "the corpse explodes into life."

It is in this sense that Claudio Naranjo believes that awareness of death and willingness to experience the pain of the impasse is an essential aspect of Gestalt Therapy.

It would seem, therefore, that the prescription of living in the present goes hand in hand with the *awareness of death*--either the ultimate death or the chronic death of the moment as it becomes mere memory. In this sense it is a perception of the past as nothingness or unreality.

Awareness of potential death is also part of the spirit of Gestalt Therapy, for such awareness is inseparable from human consciousness when freed from the avoidance of unpleasantness and from the veil of illusory satisfactions in unreality . . .⁵⁴

This language is quite consistent with some strands of existential philosophy. What Gestalt Therapy adds to philosophy is a relatively adequate psychology and a methodology for facilitating the resolution of the impasse. As philosophy, the theory of impasse resolution describes the situation of the "existential man," every

⁵³This formulation anticipates Paul.

⁵⁴Claudio Naranjo, "Present-Centeredness: Technique, Prescription, Ideal," in Fagan and Shepherd, *Gestalt Therapy Now*, p. 64.

man of our time, and it describes the process of death and rebirth through which he proceeds in claiming authentic life.

As psychology, the theory describes the personality of the neurotic in its lifelessness, anxiety, and depression. It also describes the psychotherapeutic process through which the personality is changed as it proceeds toward healthful living. It must be noted that what differentiates the neurotic from the healthful mode of life is the willingness to pass through the impasse as it occurs in daily living. It must be remembered that the impasse "occurs every time you are not ready or not willing to use your own resources . . . and when environmental support is not forthcoming." This means that the impasse resolution is not a once and for all event, but must be lived through every time the impasse is encountered.

Neurotic Splitting of Existence

The primary theoretical element in neurosis is the fragmentation of existence by means of diminished or distorted contact. This has been noted in the fragmentation of the organism into the "I" and the "not-I," but it is also characteristic of neurosis in other areas. In neurosis, with diminished contact, an individual's relationship with him/herself and with the environment is distorted. The theory of how this distortion functions and how it arises is central in Gestalt Therapy.

The ability of the self to become an object for itself is both a blessing and a curse. It is the ground of the highest self-

knowledge and wisdom. It is also the ground of the neurotic fragmentation of existence. In neurotic functioning, the unity of the organism (body and mind) and the unity of the field (environment/organism) are habitually bifurcated. In the neurotic disunity of the organism, the individual is the object of his/her own self-manipulation and self-torture. Body and mind are antagonistic. Important elements of the personality are split off and alienated from the "I." The personality becomes "other" to itself.

In the neurotic disunity of the field, the environment and the organism lose their ability to interact harmoniously. The organism no longer is able to nourish itself and to grow. The neurotic manipulates the environment, including other people, to give to him/her, what he/she could provide alone with integrated functioning.⁵⁵

In healthy functioning, the personality is contactfully meeting his/her environment. The essential unity of the organism and the field are undisturbed. In neurotic functioning, habitual distortions of the contact functions result in an existential dualism. The neurotic avoidance of contact so fragments the personality into factions that it cannot function, it falls into depression, anxiety, and lifelessness. The neurotic "I" may identify with introjects and alienate essential elements of the total personality. These alienated elements are not eliminated from the personality, but they are

⁵⁵Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 23. "I call neurotic any man who uses his resources to manipulate others instead of growing up himself."

pushed outside of the "I-boundary."

Since the differentiation of existence takes place in polarities, the differentiation of identification and alienation also takes place in polarities. The "I" identifies with one element of the polarity and alienates the opposite. The "I" understands itself to be the one, and not to be the opposite. For example, the "I" might think of itself as "good" and not "bad"; or as "brave" and not "cowardly." The alienated pole is a complex, a "holoid" of the personality and is also capable of being represented by "I." The therapeutic task is to bring the "I" of consciousness into dialogue with the "I" which represents the alienated elements.

In the Gestalt Therapy technique of chair dialogue⁵⁶ these elements may be brought into contact.

Gestalt Therapy views the individual as a "never-ending sequence of polarities";⁵⁷ ". . . whatever is, will differentiate into opposites."⁵⁸ Neurotic functioning is characterized by polarities of the personality which are alienated from one another. Rather than working together in a rhythmic harmony, they restrict each other.

Anxiety

In Gestalt Therapy, anxiety is a distortion of the natural

⁵⁶Joen Fagan, "Three Sessions with Iris," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 42.

⁵⁷Polster and Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*, p. 61.

⁵⁸Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 76.

excitement of the organism; a facet of the *élan vital*.⁵⁹ As such, it is a natural part of the organism's ability to respond effectively and efficiently to ongoing experience. Anxiety becomes neurotic only when excitement occurs without contact, for then it becomes distorted and delayed.

Neurotic anxiety has two separate formulations in Gestalt Therapy literature. Both formulations imply a lack of contact. In the earlier formulation, anxiety is ". . . excitement (aggression) with insufficient oxygen."⁶⁰

The second formulation is the "tension between the now and later."⁶¹ This is Perls' variation of Freud's idea that thinking is trial work.⁶² Perls believed that anxiety in its neurotic form is the anticipation of a "catastrophic or anastrophic event." Neurotic anxiety participates in the characteristic splitting of existence. It may be viewed as a partial or fragmented awareness. The total organism is split into mind (fantasy action) and body. The organism's sense of the actual environment is lost. The separated mind imagines the pain or pleasure of the future action and the body reacts accordingly. It prepares for action with adrenalin, increased heart rate,

⁵⁹Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 30; *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 17; *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 167.

⁶⁰Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 128, 409; *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*, p. 266.

⁶¹Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 47.

⁶²Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 171.

etc., but the actual present situation is perceived as unlikely to tolerate action and the body must inhibit or constrict the excitement. This is accomplished by a physical constriction of the breathing which reduces the supply of oxygen to the system. The splitting of existence into fantasy and actuality, mind and body, reduces the contact with the actual situation and increases the intra-psychic conflict. The personality system is at war with itself, half preparing for action and half attempting to prevent action. The appropriateness of the specific action can be determined only in contact with the actual situation, but neurotic splitting inhibits contact. The neurotic, functioning with diminished contact, floats in a world of fantasy, a world with diminished actuality.⁶³ The neurotic, out of contact with the actual, is a ". . . set of obsolete responses."⁶⁴ Alive contactful responsiveness and spontaneous creativity are lost.

The neurotic "I" identifies with a specific set of responses. Whenever the organism responds with action which does not conform to those set responses, they are inhibited. Anxiety occurs when a response or an action, or an element of the personality which has been disowned, threatens to emerge. Anxiety is a symptom of impasse.

Neurotic Deadness: Implosion and Explosion

Perls believes that the most frequently censored reaction is

⁶³Frederick Perls, *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy* (Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1973), p. 52.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 125.

aggression.⁶⁵ To be alive is to aggress, to come out to meet existence actively and creatively, not merely to wait listlessly for things to happen. For the neurotic, any aggression is fearful for it threatens the status quo. Any liveliness threatens the "as if" person with the emergence of alive responsiveness. The "as if" person is always in danger of being discovered, or of discovering for him/herself, that the "as if" is not the actual. Hence the "as if" person lives in chronic anxiety.

Anxiety results in neurotic deadness. This may be seen in terms of the polarity of implosion and explosion. In his statement of the layers of the neurosis, Perls treated implosion and explosion as layers with the implication that explosion was deeper than implosion. This is a distortion. Elsewhere he has treated them as ontological polarities; two poles opposed to each other, yet with an intrinsic tendency to become each other.⁶⁶

Explosion is the process of life, change, movement, and expansion.⁶⁷ It appears clinically as anger, grief, joy and orgasm.⁶⁸ Implosion is the process of holding together, or binding. It is reflected in the tendency to reify, to make things out of processes.

⁶⁵Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 21.

⁶⁶Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 76.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶⁸Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 56.

In science we try to find ultimate matter, but the more we split up matter, the more we find other matter. We find movement, and movement equals energy: movement, impact, energy, but no things. Things come about, more or less, by man's need for security. You can manipulate a thing, you can play fitting games with it. These concepts, these somethings can be put together into something else. 'Something' is a thing, so even an abstract noun becomes a thing . . .

When we work in therapy, we always come across the nothingness, and we see that this no-thingness is some very alive process. I hope you understand the meaning of dealing with things--that in order to bring things back to life, we have to change them into process again. Reification, the making of a thing out of a process, is the functioning of what I call the implosive or catatonic or death layer.⁶⁹

Implosion is "the power of contracting, the power of gravity. Without that power the earth would fall to pieces, would float, disintegrate."⁷⁰

In describing the interaction of implosion and explosion, Perls uses the analogy of the diesel engine. The compression cycle (implosion) generates enough heat so that the cycle becomes a controlled explosion (expansion).⁷¹ This rhythm of implosion and explosion is a basic property of life. It is the rhythm of expansion and contraction, of contact and withdrawal. It is a true polarity in that there is an inherent tendency for the one to become the other, and each is dependent upon the other for its own existence. Implosion unbalanced by explosion leads to alienation. Explosion unbalanced by implosion leads to confluence. It is the implosion in the walls of the diesel cylinders which contain the explosion and allow it to be harnessed.

⁶⁹Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 19.

⁷⁰Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 183.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

The healthy personality is able to maintain the unity of this polarity, allowing free movement from one pole to the other, without excess effort. Without getting stuck or captured by one pole or the other. In neurosis, explosion and implosion become discontinuous and lose their free flowing reciprocity. Because explosion (aggression) is phobically avoided in our culture,⁷² whenever it threatens to emerge as the spontaneous organismic response, it is inhibited by excessive implosion.

A common example of this in our culture is during bereavement, where the natural response of the organism to the environmental situation (death) is an explosion into grief. Social convention restricts the public expression of grief, and the individual identifying with the social norm is presented with a dilemma. If he/she follows the natural tendency of the organism, the explosion into grief may bring social censure in one form or another. To maintain the socially defined sense of propriety, the individual must inhibit (implode) the explosion (hold back the tears, etc.). Physically this is accomplished, as in anxiety, by a constriction of the breathing.

In the neurotic the mechanism of inhibition is lost to awareness and becomes habitual. Habitual and unaware implosion restricts aggression and leaves the individual with a set of deadened responses.

⁷²Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 21.

IMPASSE AND IMPASSE RESOLUTION

Impasse is process arrested, a dynamic opposition of forces within the personality. When the polarities of existence are fragmented and bifurcated, they oppose each other, as in implosion and explosion, or in body and fantasy. Whenever two elements war, each attempting to determine the action of the organism as a whole, there is an impasse. Impasse emerges in awareness when the environment does not support the system of identification of the "I" and the "I" is not yet willing to risk action outside of the limits of its identification system.

When an individual is willing to engage the impasse with awareness, its resolution becomes a possibility. Impasse becomes not just the threat of death, but the process of death and rebirth. It is the destruction of the antagonism of holoids to allow for the emergence of a new transcending gestalt. Impasse, unresolved, functions to maintain the status quo, to persevere the fragmentation of neurotic existence. It is death. Impasse resolved offers rebirth.

Impasse is not a barrier. It is a dynamic opposition of forces within the personality. It is a tension of opposites, not interacting freely, but competing. At the impasse, the familiar meets the unfamiliar and the status quo of the "as if" existence is threatened by new awareness.

This acute tension of opposites is experienced by the individual who is willing to stand at the impasse as death, or fear of

death.⁷³ The individual is confronted with parts of him/herself which have been alienated and are disliked and often disgusting; with elements of the environment which have been avoided and are unknown and unfamiliar; with the sense of humiliation at being caught, and having wasted life in pseudo-life; and a sense of shame at having the actual self showing.

Physically, an acute impasse situation may manifest itself during a therapeutic session with extreme symptoms such as severe headache, muscular spasms, chills, blushing and blotching, breathing difficulties. Emotionally the individual may feel blank, confused, frightened. At the impasse, one's life as it has been known is on the line. Quite literally, what the neurotic has been, is subject to death. The gestalts that have given meaning and context to his/her life are dissolving and the new gestalten which will replace them are not yet forming.⁷⁴ At the impasse, one enters a "never never land" which lies between the has been and the not yet. To stand at the impasse is to look into the abyss, or to float in the mythical limbo. "To suffer one's death and be reborn is not easy."⁷⁵

In Gestalt Therapy, the resolution of impasse is not simply the restoration of the unity of the organism and the field. It includes the notion of growth, a process of maturing. Latner has

⁷³Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, p. 183.

⁷⁴Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 25.

⁷⁵Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, frontpiece.

stated:

Growth consists of being able to form gestalts of greater and greater complexity. As infants . . . the components of the field are few and our facility in manipulating them minimal. As we grow, we begin to be able to integrate other elements into our functioning. . . . we expand our awareness to include new aspects of the field. Enlarging our possibilities, we constantly create solutions that are more encompassing and more complex . . .

Making gestalts is making wholes. It is the process of unifying disparate elements. As we grow, we become capable of organizing more and more of the field into wholes. Functioning freely, we do not stand apart from this process. The wholes we make include ourselves. We are part of the unity of the field. . . . The last gestalt is beginning to know the immensity of the extent of our interaction with everything else.⁷⁶

If these gestalts of increasing complexity are to be formed, the fragmentation of the field, the organism, and the environment must be released. The contact function must be revitalized, bringing the individual into touch with his/her actual existence and exposing the superficiality of the "as if" roles. Increasing contact with actual existence precipitates a crisis for the neurotic. The Gestalt Therapy term for this crisis is impasse.

The resolution of the impasse is governed by the theory of paradoxical change. Stated briefly, the impasse will not dissolve as long as the individual is attempting to change him/herself.⁷⁷ It is only when he/she is willing to surrender the attempt at self-change, self-manipulation, that change becomes a possibility.

⁷⁶Latner, *Gestalt Therapy Book*, p. 225.

⁷⁷Arnold Beiser, "The Paradoxical Theory of Change," in Fagan and Shepherd, *Gestalt Therapy Now*, p. 77.

The result of the impasse is to keep the status quo. . . . The incredible thing which is so difficult to understand is that experience, awareness of the now, is sufficient to solve all difficulties of this nature, that is, neurotic difficulties. If you are fully aware of the impasse, the impasse will collapse and you will find yourself suddenly through it.⁷⁸

The theory of paradoxical change has been formulated more systematically by Arnold Beiser.

. . . change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not. Change does not take place through a coercive attempt by the individual or by another person to change him, but it does take place if one takes the time and effort to be what he is--to fully invest in his current position.⁷⁹

This accurately states the parameters of impasse resolution. As long as the neurotic individual is attempting to change him/herself, the fragmentation of the organism is being continued. A new and more sophisticated "as if" role is replacing the previous roles. One set of personality antinomies replaces another, but the structure of fragmentation is unaffected.

At the impasse, the Gestalt Therapist does not aim for change. To do so runs the risk of aligning him/herself with the individual's own self-manipulation, with one or the other of the antagonistic fragments of self, thereby preventing any change at all. What the therapist does attempt to do is to assist the individual develop awareness of what he/she *is* doing.

⁷⁸Perls, "Four Lectures," p. 25.

⁷⁹Beiser, "Paradoxical Theory," p. 77.

The task in resolving the polarity is to aid each part to live to its fullest while at the same time making contact with its polar counterpart. This reduces the chance that one part will stay mired in its own impotence, hanging on to the status quo. Instead, it is energized into making a vital statement of its own needs and wishes, asserting itself as a force which must be considered in a new union of forces.⁸⁰

This does not imply that the will has no function in Gestalt Therapy. Perls is suggesting that at any given moment, a person is what he is, and cannot be otherwise. He/she is given; and the will cannot influence what is given in this moment. The power of the will lies in what the individual does with his/her givenness. The choices that are made in this moment do influence the givenness of the next moment. But in that next moment, the givenness cannot be changed in that moment.⁸¹

Given the starting point in neurotic existence of a fragmented "I," that neurotic "I" cannot, by its own power, give health to the total organism. The paradox of impasse-resolution is that the neurotic "I" must be willing to sacrifice itself, to give up the attempt to give life to the total organism. Only when this happens, can growth take place in a new integration of the personality.

The resolution of the impasse implies an integration of the organism and the environment, and of the personality with itself. This integration is possible when contact is made between what, in neurosis, has been split. In Gestalt Therapy, *awareness* is the

⁸⁰Polster and Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*, p. 62.

⁸¹Robert W. Resnick, "Gestalt Therapy: A Reply to an Attack," unpublished manuscript, p. 7.

function of integration, and hence of impasse resolution.⁸² In awareness, a new gestalt is formed which transcends the old ones. The new "I" which emerges includes and transforms the neurotic fragments. But the paradox of impasse resolution is that the new gestalt emerges only when the "I" stops interfering and allows itself to be transformed.

GESTALT AWARENESS

In this study, Gestalt Therapy is treated as being a process which leads from the fragmentation of neurosis to the integrating wholeness of health and growth. This has been called impasse resolution. Awareness is the function which makes the resolution of impasse possible. As such, awareness is the key concept in Gestalt Therapy, giving cohesiveness to the theory. John Enright summarizes the role of awareness in the theory of Gestalt Therapy:

The theoretical and therapeutic core of Gestalt therapy is *awareness*. This is essentially an undefined term referring to a particular kind of immediate experience, but it is possible to attempt some verbal description and distinguish it from other states of consciousness. Awareness develops *with* and is integrally *part of* an organismic-environmental transaction. It includes thinking and feeling, but it is always based on current perception of the current situation.⁸³

No term in Gestalt Therapy literature is used more inconsistently than awareness. In some strands of the literature it is a

⁸²Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 400ff.

⁸³John Enright, "An Introduction to Gestalt Techniques," in Fagan and Shepherd, *Gestalt Therapy Now*, p. 117.

metaphysical principle, a fundamental unit of the universe.⁸⁴ In other situations it is synonymous with human consciousness.⁸⁵ Perls equates awareness with experience⁸⁶ and as such it is present in all existence, both organic and inorganic.⁸⁷ The complexity of the concept itself and the inconsistency with which it is used in the theory make an understanding of it difficult. As Enright notes, awareness is "essentially an undefined term." We may say that awareness exists and we may describe it, but it may not be defined.⁸⁸

In the context of this discussion, awareness is described as a process of increasing contact, increasing integration, and increasing presence.

Awareness and Contact

In Gestalt Therapy, all awareness is awareness of something.⁸⁹ This presupposes a differentiation of subject and object. The contact function in its capacity of touching allows simultaneous differentiation and relatedness. In this formulation, awareness is awareness of something without introducing a duality.

⁸⁴Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, pp. 30ff.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Enright, "An Introduction," p. 117.

⁸⁹Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 13.

Every contacting act is a whole of awareness, motor response, and feeling--a cooperation of the sensory, muscular, and vegetative systems--and contacting occurs at the surface-boundary *in* the field of the organism/environment.

We say it in this odd way, rather than 'at the boundary between the organism and the environment,' because, as previously discussed, the definition of an animal includes its environment: . . . The definition of an organism is the definition of an organism/environment field; and the contact-boundary is, so to speak, the specific organ of awareness of the novel situation of the field. . . .⁹⁰

Gestalt awareness depends upon healthy contact.⁹¹ It is an immediate participation in the rhythm of separateness and union, a simultaneous sensing of self and other. In its most complete form, it has been likened to Martin Buber's "I-Thou" relationship.⁹² But awareness in the resolution of the impasse is not merely the return to an undifferentiated wholeness. Awareness presupposes some differentiation of the field, but it does not permit a fragmentation of the field. The possibility of differentiation and unity as simultaneous events is implicit in the concept of awareness.

Awareness as contact is a "middle mode" of subject-object relationships.⁹³ It is neither the fragmentation of existence which is characteristic of neurosis and which leads to alienation. Nor is it the absence of differentiation of the field as in confluence or in

⁹⁰Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, p. 258.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁹²Claudio Naranjo, "I and Thou: Here and Now: Contributions of Gestalt Therapy," Esalen Institute, paper No. 5, 1967.

⁹³Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 376ff.; Latner, *Gestalt Therapy Book*, pp. 22ff.

certain types of mystical union. Awareness as contact allows the clear sense of "I" as different than the "not-I" but still related to the "not-I."

Awareness and introspection. Awareness needs to be distinguished from introspection. In introspection the "I" is split, one part observing another part, making it the object of its own judgment, analysis, criticism, praise, disgust, love, etc. The quality of introspective awareness is manipulative. The personality does not experience itself in its wholeness, but in its fragmentation. It is a thing for itself.⁹⁴ As Enright expresses this distinction:

Awareness is the whole self, conscious of that to which the organism is attending. Introspection is effortful, forced concentration; awareness is spontaneous concentration on that which is exciting and of interest. Introspection, being relatively detached from ongoing total organismic concern and being out of touch with the actual environment can never discover anything very new, but only rearrange and rehash the verbally remembered and hence un-nourishing past. Awareness, being in contact with the current environment and organism, always includes something refreshingly new. Genuine awareness is always a little bit of a surprise since neither the organism nor the environment is ever quite the same.⁹⁵

In Gestalt Therapy, habitual introspection is pathological. It serves the neurotic function of maintaining the fragmentation of the human personality. When the personality treats itself as an object, it is de-humanizing and destructive.

⁹⁴This distinction is similar to Martin Buber's "philosophical anthropology." See, "What is Man?" in his *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 118ff.

⁹⁵Enright, "An Introduction," p. 118.

In awareness, the "I" is not fragmented. It does not watch itself as an observer. Rather, it enters the flow of its own experience, participating in it fully. In awareness, the "I" engages the environment with excitement and aliveness.

Awareness and verbal awareness. Awareness must be distinguished from awareness which is merely verbal. In verbal awareness the organism is split, thought is severed from action, body and mind are separate. Verbal awareness and the split it produces, allow the bifurcation of intent and behavior. With verbal awareness an individual may say one thing and do another, like the alcoholic with New Years resolutions. This becomes the distinction of willing and doing. In verbal awareness, one may speak of love or pain without actually experiencing it fully. The talking about becomes a substitute for the full experience.

Awareness implies a unity of thought and action, of mind and body. Awareness overcomes the split within the organism, integrating ongoing experience so that one may say, "I am the thinker and the doer."⁹⁶

Awareness and fantasy. Awareness must be distinguished from fantasy. In fantasy, reality and the sense of the actual are diminished.⁹⁷ The unity of the organism and the environment are split.

⁹⁶Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, p. 446.

⁹⁷Perls, *Gestalt Approach*, pp. 44ff.

The gestalts which form in fantasy do not conform to the actual environment.⁹⁸ The "I" is out of contact with the actual. In fantasy, an individual may imagine a friend's expression to be critical when in fact no criticism was intended. Or an individual may imagine that everything is going well at a job, when in fact a termination is imminent.

Awareness is the integration of the organism with the environment. It is the integration of fantasy with actual ongoing sensory experience. It is the harmonization of gestalts formed in the environment with the gestalts formed in the organism.

Gestalt Awareness and Presence

Gestalt awareness is present awareness. It is process arising within ongoing organismic/environmental interaction.⁹⁹ The locus of awareness is always and only the present moment.

There is only present awareness. Contact and support require our awareness if they are to weigh in healthy functioning. Awareness in turn is the experience of what is in front of us now. Contact, experience, and change are all possible only in the present. We can be aware of things that happened in the past or will (we hope, or fear) happen in the future, but our awareness is happening now. We must live in the present, we have no choice.¹⁰⁰

Awareness of the present does not exclude awareness of the past and of the future, but these become the present activities of

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹⁹Enright, "An Introduction," p. 118.

¹⁰⁰Latner, *Gestalt Therapy Book*, p. 71.

remembering and anticipating. To be fully aware of the present is to be fully in contact with the unity of the total field of experience. Claudio Naranjo has described this quality of awareness as "present-centeredness,"¹⁰¹ while the Polsters refer to it simply as "presence."¹⁰²

Presence demands contact. With contact, awareness of the actual develops, whether it is an actual rock, or an actual thought, or an actual want. Unlike Perls, the Polsters avoid metaphysical speculation in their discussion of awareness as presence. Presence is awareness of the continuum of the ever present now.

At its best, awareness is a continuous means for keeping up to date with one's self. It is an ongoing process, readily available at all times, rather than an exclusive or sporadic illumination that can be achieved--like insight--only at special moments or under special conditions. It is always there, like an underground stream, ready to be tapped into . . .¹⁰³

Awareness is happening in the present moment. All we can be aware of is what is happening now. Even our reflections and reminiscences take place now, in the present. To understand with our whole being what 'now' means is health. For if we are totally aware of now, we are in touch with all of what exists for us, and the process by which our living occurs issues from that.¹⁰⁴

Awareness of the now is contactful living. It is being in touch with the reality which determines existence, and with the potential for responsivity of the organism.

¹⁰¹Naranjo, "Present-Centeredness," p. 64.

¹⁰²Polster and Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*, p. 11.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹⁰⁴Latner, *Gestalt Therapy Book*, p. 55.

Gestalt Awareness and Integration

Gestalt awareness is an integrating process. In its most metaphysical sense, awareness is the principle of organization through which the millions of events which constitute an organism are integrated into a single whole. Awareness is the gestalt of being.¹⁰⁵ The integration which awareness allows is not undifferentiated unity, for without some differentiation awareness is impossible.¹⁰⁶ Rather, it is awareness with contact. The Polsters approach this quality of awareness under the term "synaptic experience." The use of the phrase synapse refers to the neuro-physical bridge which occurs between individual nerve fibers allowing them to function in unified cooperation. The fibers remain distinct, yet they are integrated by the synapse.

Synaptic experience. In attempting to explain their notion of synaptic experience, the Polsters speak of awareness of wants as allowing the integration of the individual and the environment. A clear awareness of wants, of what it is that the organism wants or needs, integrates the eternal present with the past and future.

Awareness of wants, like awareness of any experience, is an orientating function. It directs, it mobilizes, it channels, it focuses. A want is a blip into the future. People who have no wants--depressed people, for example--have no future. . . .

A want is a linking function, integrating present experience with the future where its gratification lies and also with the

¹⁰⁵Perls, *et al.*, *Gestalt Therapy*, pp. 290ff.

¹⁰⁶Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 13.

past which it culminates and summarizes. Wants grow from where one has been; making sense out of sensations and feelings which led to this moment of wanting. Only by touching into where one is and what one wants right now can one forge the central link in the chain of events and experiences which make up one's life.¹⁰⁷

Awareness is the connecting thread running through life. It is the quality which makes one's life, not just an accumulation of unrelated events, but which makes it a related whole. An individual life, while participating in all life, is also an individual gestalt related to itself through the thread of awareness. The Polsters suggest the term, "culminative experience" to denote this quality of Gestalt awareness.

The culminative experience is a composite form; it is a total and united event which is of central relevance to the individual. In writing these words, for example, the act of writing is a culmination of a lifetime of experiences which have led to this moment and which form a part of the composite act of writing. Furthermore, each movement of the finger, each breath, each tangential thought, each variation of attention, confidence, clarity, join together to form the composite experience, 'I am writing.'¹⁰⁸

The synaptic experience is an experience of the union between awareness and expression. The metaphor of the synaptic experience focuses attention on united sensori-motor functions as they are represented in personal experience--as *awareness* (sensory) and *expression* (motor). Though at the moment emphasis is on the individual's sensation, expression *emerges* from this awareness and together they form a united experience.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Polster and Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*, pp. 227ff.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 214.

Awareness and the transcending "I."¹¹⁰ As synaptic experience, or integrating experience, awareness implies a transcending function of the "I." Although this notion has not been developed in the literature of Gestalt Therapy, it is clearly implicit in the notion of awareness. In awareness, the "I" does not identify itself with any specific content, nor does it alienate any specific content. Rather, it identifies itself with the integrating process itself. The "I" understands itself or experiences itself to be a synthetic process, a dialogical self. The "I" becomes the synapse of the organism, it becomes the integrating function of the whole.

With reference to the splits of the personality, the "I" understands itself to be both one side and the other side, and *also* to be the integrating "I." The transcending "I" brings the factions of the self into dialogue with each other and out of this dialogue a new whole emerges, a new gestalt.

In neurosis the "I" becomes identified with a specific content, alienating other conflicting content. In awareness, the "I" identifies itself with the integrating continuum of experience. The "I" becomes the personification of culminative experience and of the synapse. It transcends each ingredient experience, integrating them into a culminative experience.

¹¹⁰The concept of the transcending "I" is influenced in part by the concept of the "self-transcending-self" as developed by Cobb. See John B. Cobb, Jr., "Intrapsychic Structure of Christian Existence," *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, XXXVI:4 (December 1968), 327; *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

In the resolution of the impasse, when the "I" of one faction and the "I" of the polar faction are brought into dialogue with each other, a new "I" emerges which transcends them both. Because it is a new gestalt, it is more than the sum of its parts. It is an "I" which knows that it has its being from its participation in the dialogue and not through identity with the content of either part alone.

SUMMARY

The theory of Gestalt Therapy has been characterized as describing a process of integration in which the fragmentation and divisiveness of neurotic existence is integrated; and contactful and aware growth becomes a possibility. The process has been termed, "impasse resolution" in an attempt to avoid the static "thingism" of Perls' theory of the layers of the neurosis.

The process by which the neurotic maintains the fragmentation and alienation of his/her existence was characterized as a habitual distortion of contact and an avoidance of the actual. The primary means the neurotic utilizes to accomplish this were outlined. The primary symptoms of the neurosis, anxiety and depression were discussed from a Gestalt Therapy point of view.

When the relatively rigid responses of the neurotic are unsupported, they fail. The individual is presented with an impasse situation. Impasse occurs when the habitual responses are not adequate, and new responses have not yet been developed. The impasse is experienced as extremely uncomfortable, often as the possibility of

death.

Impasse resolution is a possibility only when the individual surrenders the attempt to change him/herself and surrenders to what is at the moment. It is in the paradox of being what one is that change comes unbidden.

The development of full awareness allows resolution of the impasse. Awareness is the heart of the theory of Gestalt Therapy. It is both a metaphysical concept and a psychological concept. As a metaphysical idea, it is one of the ultimates of the universe. As a psychological concept, it includes the properties of increasing integration, increasing contact, and increasing presence.

In awareness the unity of the organism and the field is established and maintained. The ability of the personality to nourish itself is increased through its increased contactfulness.

The process of impasse resolution emerges as a process of death and re-birth. It is a process in which the individual is transformed, and the fragmentation of his/her existence is discarded for a new unity. It is a process in which the individual claims full liveliness and releases the deadness and lifelessness which are characteristic of neurotic fragmentation. The impasse occurs every time the individual is not ready or willing to use full organismic resources. For most, it is a frequent experience. Its resolution occurs every time the individual is willing to be as he/she is, without self-manipulation.

Chapter 3

IMPASSE RESOLUTION IN THREE TRANSCRIPTS

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the process of impasse resolution as an actual phenomenon and to give three illustrations of it in practice. The three transcripts selected are representative examples of Gestalt Therapy, although they reflect the style of the individual therapist. All three are drawn from ongoing therapeutic relationships. While all sessions are not of the intensity and depth of these transcripts, most individuals in Gestalt Therapy do come to comparable experiences of their own.

The basic technique of impasse resolution involves engaging the individual in the impasse and holding him/her there. The therapist encourages the individual to identify with each of the fragments of the "I" in turn, and then to bring them into dialogue with each other. Resolution of impasse has been identified with the emergence of awareness, or as described in this study, the transcending "I." This becomes a possibility when the fragments of the personality are brought into dialogue and the individual comes to understand him/herself, not as one fragment or the other, but as a dynamic interaction of both together. In this awareness, a new whole of personality emerges which does not necessarily alienate any components of the total personality. This aware "I" identifies itself with the process of awareness.

THE TRANSCRIPTS

The following three transcripts are named Bruce, Elaine, and Pat. A brief description of the individual precedes each transcript.

Bruce

Bruce is an affluent suburbanite living outside of Los Angeles. He is seventeen years old, completing his senior year of high school. He is very bright and is doing well in honors classes. He is living at home with his mother and step-father. His presenting problem is chronic prostatitis which has not responded to extensive medical treatment. His physician suspected a psychosomatic component and referred him for treatment. At the first session Bruce mentioned other symptoms. He spoke of "liking to think about things," but not enjoying doing them. He enjoys thinking about listening to music, but doesn't enjoy actually listening to the records because of worry about surface noise on the records. He makes long lists of things to do, but seldom does the things on the list. He worries constantly about not having done what he said he would do. He enjoys thinking about sex, but doesn't actually enjoy intercourse. The following transcript is from the third session with Bruce.

T1: Hello, Bruce.

B1: What's the haps?

T2: Not much. I had a good week . . . (deleted details of week. . . .) So, now I'm interested in where you are. What do you bring to work with today?

B2: Last week's session really blew my mind. It really freaked

me out. I don't know if I was just making that stuff up, or if it is real, know what I mean?

T3: Not really; making what stuff up?

B3: Talking to myself. The things that I said as the two sides of me, the straw man and the wiseman and superman and the lady. I mean, it's too real. That really fits with what's inside of my head. I've noticed more how that's going on all the time. Those dudes are talking to each other in my head all the time. It really freaks me out. But, you know what I really want to talk about today?

T4: (Laughing) No. What?

B4: All right! Don't laugh at me this is serious.

T5: So what do you want to work with today?

B5: Well the sex thing came up again. It's such a bummer.

T6: What do you mean?

B6: Well, I went skiing this weekend with Linda and her folks. She is a friend. I like her a lot, but she's just a friend. I was looking forward to getting out on the slopes and the whole thing, but it really got bummed out. She is a really neat person, but she is my friend, you know?

T7: Not really. I can't get a handle on what you are talking about. Can you be a bit more specific?

B7: Well, you know, I wasn't interested in going to bed with her or anything. I just wanted to ski and talk; it was going to be such a great time. But when we got there her dad got us a room together with a double bed, and then I felt like I had to have sex with her even if I didn't want to. What a bummer. You can't even go skiing with a girl and her family without having to sleep with her.

T8: You said you didn't want to sleep with her, but what did your body want? Did you feel turned on?

B8: Well, at first I was really turned off. I didn't want to at all, but I didn't want to hurt her feelings by not doing it and I didn't want her to think that I am weird or that I didn't like her or anything. Then when we got into bed I got real turned on, but I kept thinking that I didn't like her enough to have sex with her, you know, that I would be just using her. And then, I didn't want not to because she

would be hurt and I didn't want to hurt her. You know, what a bummer? But afterwards I didn't like her anymore. It like ruined our friendship. I don't think that I was a very good lover and I don't think she liked me very much either.

At this point the split becomes clear. From the therapist's viewpoint, the content is not so important as the process. Here the process is a clear splitting of the personality. There is a part which wants to have sex, a part which does not want to. Body and mind are not in harmony; thought and action are not coordinated. While there are important questions of values here, the most pressing therapeutic task at this stage of therapy is to begin the process of resolving the splits. This becomes the working point.

T9: Bruce, I hear another split going on. It sounds to me like there is a part of you that didn't want to have sex and another part that wanted to look good, didn't want to hurt her feelings and didn't want her to think that you're "weird."

B9: Yah, but I couldn't tell her that. You just can't open your mouth and tell someone something like that. I might have hurt her feelings. Anyway, if I think I'm strange, then she sure would.

T10: Well, I'll tell you what I'd like you to experiment with. Put old Bruce in this chair and play the part of yourself that knows just what he should do. Just let that side come out and say anything that pops into your head. Tell Bruce what he should do.

Bruce appears to be identified with his "shoulds" and is more concerned with his appearance than with what is right or wrong for him intrinsically. This therapeutic move allows him to give expression to the extrinsic or introjected value system. It is asking Bruce to experiment with making his identification public.

B10: (To empty chair representing Bruce.) Well, man, you gotta sleep with Linda because if you don't she's gonna think that

you are a weirdo. You gotta get to it. Get it on. Everybody's doin' it. (Bruce is mimicking himself.)

T11: O.K. Now switch chairs and be this other side and answer him back.

B11a: Well, I don't want to sleep with her. I don't like her that well.

B11b: (Other chair.) You don't need to like her to sleep with her. Your friends sleep with lots of people they are only friends with. Man, you've got to be an animal. Where is your cave-man? Don't think about it so much. You think it to death.

B12: (Other chair.) Well, I can't do that. I don't want to do it. I know I should do it, but I don't want to.

The content of this interchange is deceptive. It is a reversal of the typical pattern. Bruce's introjected value system demands that he fulfill the image of the liberated man, when there are important parts of his total being which are far from "liberated" in this sense. The fundamental issue is not one of content, but of process, the splitting of the personality and the alienation of some parts. In this case, Bruce does not give full credence to those parts of himself which do not wish to have sex. He subordinates those parts to the desire to appear "as if" he were his image of how he "should" be. In this splitting the total is lost. Every time the environment does not support the split and Bruce is not willing to support himself, the impasse is precipitated. In this situation, the girl's father, as environment, did not support Bruce's "as if" role within its limit and Bruce was not willing to risk telling his own preference.

T12: Now expand this dialogue. Let these two characters talk about other things Bruce does or doesn't do, some of the other areas of his life.

B13a: You know, Bruce, you shouldn't try to keep your room so neat. You're really compulsive about your room. Relax and let it be. It's all right if things aren't just so, only don't get so up tight about it. Don't worry if your records aren't just so, relax and listen to them. Don't spend so much time checking them for scratches. Loosen up. Don't be so nervous.

B13b: But that's the way I am. I like things just that way. I like my records without any scratches. I like my room neat.

B14a: Well, you spend so much time at it. You don't spend enough time at the things you should be doing. You should spend at least an hour and a half doing homework and at least an hour and a half practicing piano. You shouldn't leave these things until the last minute. You're lazy and you use your nervousness as a cover-up.

B14b: First you tell me to relax, now you tell me to get down to work on piano and homework. If I did everything that you want me to do, I wouldn't have any time for the things I like to do. I wouldn't have any fun.

B15a: But you waste so much time with your up-tight trips.

T13: Bruce, what is your experience while you are doing this?

B16: It's just what I do; it's what goes on in my head all the time.

T14: Yah, but how do you feel about this? Does this make you feel good, or angry, or happy, or what?

B17: I feel really bad. I feel like it's hopeless. It's like no matter what I do I can't do it right. I just don't leave myself alone. It's bad enough that my parents are on me all the time, I could at least leave me alone. (Starts to cry.) What am I going to do?

The impasse here is clear. Whenever one side sets a course of action, the polar side sabotages it and an unresolved state of tension between the opposites is established. This tension leads to a chronic inhibition of action, a behavioral stalemate. Neither side is satisfied, neither allows the other to gain satisfaction. The result of this impasse is Bruce's feeling of hopelessness. The therapeutic task is to establish a meaningful dialogue between these fragments of

the self which allows the emergence of an integrating awareness.

T15: So Bruce, let these two characters keep talking to each other and see if you have a feeling for which side is winning.

B18: The top dog is winning, he always does.

Top-dog is a Gestalt Therapy term for the frequently observed fragment of the self which identifies the "I" with "shoulds" or "oughts."

T16: So say this to bottom-dog. Be top-dog and tell him that you always win.

Bottom-dog is a Gestalt Therapy term for the frequently observed polar opposite to the top-dog. Bottom-dog is the saboteur.

B19a: I always win, I always beat you.

B19b: I know you do, but you'll never get me. Just when you think you've got me, I disappear; but I come back when you're not expecting me. I'll always be able to get you.

T17: Sounds like a stalemate. Keep going.

B20a (Top-dog): Look you! You do what I say and everything will be just fine. If you'd not be so damned stupid and bull-headed and get off your ass and do what you know you should do, everything would be just fine. Now quit that messing around and get with it.

B20b (Bottom-dog): Well, I should do what you say, but I don't really want to. I mean I try, I really try, but I just can't seem to follow through. I am really not very together. I've got to get my shit together.

T18: So do you sense which side is winning?

B21: Top-dog is winning, he always does.

T19: I don't hear that in what you say at all. If top-dog wins, then why aren't you doing what he says you should do? It doesn't sound to me like you are doing what he says at all.

B22: I see what you mean. Only it feels like he wins, he seems so much more powerful and dominant. He like fills my head with shit. Everywhere I go I hear him telling me what I

should do. He sounds just like my step-father. (Bruce starts to weep again.)

The issue of the step-father as the source of top-dog's introjected content is attractive, however the dominant process is getting these two sides into meaningful dialogue, and approach to the introject at this point would be a distraction. Bruce still does not seem to experience the power of sabotage which the bottom-dog wields. This power appears to be alienated from his familiar "I."

T20: Ya, well, check out if bottom-dog might be into a little sabotage. Sounds like whatever the top-dog sets out to do, if bottom-dog doesn't like it, he messes it up, undermines the whole thing. Sounds to me like bottom-dog really doesn't let top-dog have his way very often at all. See if you can get with this.

B23a (Bottom-dog): You can't make me do anything I don't want to do. Sometimes I go along with you on the outside, but even then I really don't really go along. I don't really get into it. (Bruce sounds angry.) You wanted me to sleep with Linda, and I went along with that, but I didn't let you enjoy it. I made you feel so bad afterwards. You can't make me do anything that I don't want to do. No matter what you say, I can figure a way out to fuck you up. You want me to study all the time, but I just wander off and think about other things. Why don't you just bug off. I don't need you and I don't want you.

B23b (Top-dog): You shouldn't talk that way. You need me. If it wasn't for me, you'd always be getting into some kind of trouble; you don't have very good judgment about some things.

B24a (Bottom-dog): I don't even like you. You can't make me do anything I want to, I mean anything that I don't want to do. I don't even think you're so God-damned bitchin'.

B24b (Top-dog): You might not do everything that I want, but I sure can keep you from enjoying anything you want to do too. I can hassle you to death. I can wake you up in the middle of the night, and I can make you so compulsive about stuff that you'll turn into a knot.

T21: Bruce, I don't hear these two really talking to each other. It's more like they were into yelling at each other, calling

each other a lot of names. See if you can get them to listen to each other and to talk to each other.

B25a (Top-dog): Listen, guy. You and I had better get our shit together. You can keep me from getting what I want, I know that. But I can keep you from getting what you want too. So we'd better get this act together. I'll let you know how it's going to be. If you'd just trust me to know what is best for you, we'd be fine.

B25b (Bottom-dog): There is no way that I am going to give in to you, so you'd better face it. I'd rather never get my way than let you have yours. So forget it.

T22: So tell him what you do need him for.

B26: I don't need him.

T23: Well, think a minute if that's true, and if it is, let him know, but I don't think he's going to just go away. See if you can talk to him. Negotiate with him. You don't seem to be negotiating in good faith.

B27 (Bottom-dog): I guess I can't make you go away really, but I won't give in to you either because then you'd never pay any attention to me at all. I don't trust you.

T24: Start some sentences to him that begin with the words, " . . . I keep you around so . . ."

The therapist is pushing here, perhaps too much. His idea is that Bruce is able to bring these two sides of himself into dialogue. The technique of giving sentences to complete sets up an experimental situation for Bruce, possibly allowing the discovery of a new integration.

B28 (Bottom-dog): I keep you around so that I won't get into trouble. I keep you around . . . because you know more what you're doing sometimes. I keep you around because you do know what you're doing. But I'm afraid to give in to you because you always try to swallow me up.

T25: So tell him what you do when he does that.

B29: I figure a way to screw him up. I go along but I don't really get into it.

T26: Bruce talk to him. See if you can deal with him.

B30: When you try to take over I screw you up. I don't let you really get into it.

T27: Okay, Bruce, we need to stop because of time. It sounds like these two aren't quite ready to deal with each other, but it also sounds like bottom-dog has some ways of dealing with top-dog when he tries to take over. What I'd like you to try to do this week is to pay attention to what these two guys say to each other in your head during the week. Don't try to change anything too much, just see if you can get in touch.

This is a fairly typical dialogue for this stage of therapy.

Bruce is articulate and open to exploration in therapy. He later reported that he had not been really aware of bottom-dog before this session, although he had worked with top-dog in the previous session. The impasse is clearly illustrated. The reluctance of the two elements of the personality to engage each other is characteristic. The phobic quality is illustrated in B27 and B28 where Bruce fears that one side will swallow up the other. A clear resolution of the impasse does not emerge in this work, although the ground is set. The theoretical issues are clear, but Bruce isn't ready to re-own the aggression which bottom-dog expresses in a passive way.

Elaine's Dream

Elaine and her husband participated in a couples group. Her presenting problem was difficulty with her eleven year old daughter and the desire for a growing relationship in the family and in the marriage. In her work a theme of unfinished business with her parents soon emerged. This seemed to be coloring her relationship with her own daughter. The death of her father some years previously had

remained unfinished. She worked on this death several times, gradually softening her avoidance to finally saying "good-bye" to him. She came to this individual session with the following dream. The transcript begins with the telling of the dream.

E1: My dream is in two parts, or maybe it's two different dreams. I think it's two dreams. They're both fantastic. I really want to work with them.

T1: Which do you want to start with? Does one seem more important to you than the other?

E2: I want to work on them both, they really seem to be the same thing. In the first dream we are in a hospital room, my family is all here. My father is lying on the bed and we are trying to say good-bye to him. But somehow we can't talk to him. In the second dream I am standing on the edge of a huge gorge overlooking a huge river. There are lots of trees and woods. I'm not really there, I'm just watching, like a movie. I see a squadron of seals swimming down the river in formation, just like the geese fly when they migrate. There is one seal out in the river, out in front. He is the leader. They are pulling a large platform with an Indian totem pole figure on it. The other people who are watching think it is a great bird, but I know that it is really the God of the seals and that it is a seal. As I watch they pass by, taking the platform out to sea. I remember that the platform is made of wood. They take the platform floating down the river out to where the river meets the sea. It is like a funeral procession. I know that they are taking the seal god out to sea to bury him, but the other people who are watching the seals think that it is a parade.

T2: What has your attention?

E3: Well, I keep thinking of trying to talk to my father in the hospital.

T3: So we'll start there.

The next eleven exchanges are omitted. Elaine attempts to identify with a number of elements of the first dream, but remains mostly in a very intellectual frame of mind. Nothing in the dream grasps her. She is frustrated. The clear process is that she is

avoiding contact with her father. Her inability to really talk to him in the dream is repeated in the work. She moves on to the second dream.

T14: So, Elaine, play the part of the lead seal.

E15: (Sitting on the floor.) I am leading the procession out to sea. I am the big seal. We are taking the wooden seal out to sea, I am leading the procession. Uh, that's all I guess.

T15: You're really having trouble getting into this dream aren't you? Well, see if the seal has anything to say to the wooden figure.

E16 (as lead seal): No, I don't have anything to say to him.

T16: Elaine, you've avoided contact in both parts of the dream. See if you can't make some contact with the figure.

E17: I want to try being the figure. (Starts to cry after a pause. She is hunched over, very much to herself. Her voice is barely audible.) I am my father. I am dead. I am being taken out to sea to be buried. (Long silence.)

T17: Can you see Elaine on the shore?

E18: No. (Long silence. Crying has stopped.)

What Elaine is obviously avoiding is contact with her father. The impasse is clearly defined at this point in the work. Her posture and withdrawal, difficult breathing and long silences all indicate a strong implosion. There must be explosiveness nearby. But the question is, where it is and how to help her find her way through the impasse.

T18 (after long pause): Elaine, be the platform.

E19: (Long silence. Slight sobbing begins.) I am made of wood. I am floating on the river. (Pause.) I am carrying Elaine's father out to sea, to be buried.

T19: Elaine, be the platform and talk to father.

E20 (Pause, begins to cry more freely): I am your coffin, father. I am carrying you out to sea. (Crying very freely, begins to unfold her body, there is a sense of joy and excitement.) I am giving you a royal send-off. I am taking you out to sea. (Elaine makes contact with T at this point.) What a send-off. I'm really glad that I could give him that kind of a send-off.

T20: Tell that to your father.

E21: Daddy, I'm really glad that I could give you this kind of a send-off. Not many daughters can give their fathers this kind of a funeral. (To T): I really gave him a beautiful funeral. I am so grateful. What a beautiful thing I did. What a beautiful way to say good-bye. (Elaine is crying freely, but joyfully. Contact with both father and the therapist is good.)

Elaine reported a tremendous sense of power and release from this work. The impasse was related to her reluctance to contact her father and to say good-bye, to enter the process of her own grief. The impasse was encountered in the first dream where she couldn't talk to him and in the dreamwork itself in her difficulty in getting into the dream and in talking to the wooden figure (E15-E16) which later became the father.

In the dreamwork, the impasse is accompanied by strong implosion which is in tension with the explosion into grief and joy. By identifying with the platform, the aspect of the dream which is carrying out the funeral, she found support, and was able to melt the impasse. The awareness which emerged transcends the fragmentation of alienated "watcher" and the dream. She comes to experience herself as unified doer and event. This dream is her funeral procession gift to her father. In the dreamwork she comes to experience this dream, not just as a night fantasy, but as an existential event in which new integration emerges. The "I" is not simply the "I" standing remote on

the banks of the river, watching a movie. The "I" becomes inclusive. It is the "I" of the watcher, the "I" of the platform, the "I" of the father, but more importantly, it is the "I" which transcends them all.

Pat's Fantasy

Pat is a woman in her forties, currently facing the change of orientation which approaches as the last of the children prepare to leave home. Twenty years as a mother are coming to a close and a new career of commercial artist is beginning. She was referred to therapy by her pastor. Her primary complaints were severe migraine headaches, gout, a variety of metabolic disorders, and self-destructive picking of the skin. Her physicians had provided only temporary relief. She also complained of severe depression, extreme difficulty in interpersonal relationships and anxiety.

The session reproduced here occurred in the sixth month of therapy and was followed by a marked remission of symptoms. The portion of the transcript presented occurs in the last half of the hour. She has been dialoguing between the two parts of herself which engage in the skin picking, the one which picks and the face which is picked.

T22: So now continue this Pat. Really be the "picker."

P22: (Pat is very imploded. She is sitting on the floor, head down. She doesn't respond to the therapist's suggestion.)

T23: (Long pause.) Pat, what is the picker saying? Give it a voice.

P23: (Long pause.) I don't like you. (Long pause.) I want you to go away. (Pat's voice is very low, her speech is hesitant. She remains withdrawn. A slight shaking of her body becomes apparent. The tension is noticeable.)

T24: Now switch Pat. Be the face.

P24 (Long pause, Pat slowly moves to opposing spot on the floor):
You're hurting me. (Sobbing.) You're hurting me. Please
don't hurt me. Don't hurt me any more.

The impasse is clear. Pat is into it. Her aggression is clearly retroflected, she is causing herself great pain. Aggression which is unacceptable to the "as if" personality is turned against the self. In this case it takes the form of picking the skin. The pain Pat causes herself is intense. The impasse occurs when the aggression begins to emerge, but cannot be expressed. The theoretical method for undoing the retroflection is to own the aggression and to begin to turn it outward.

T25: Pat, if you weren't hurting Pat, who might you hurt? Who else do you want to hurt?

P25: (Pat makes no response. She seems to withdraw even more. Her throat is visibly engorged with blood, her face quite white. She does not seem to notice the therapist.)

T26: (Long Pause.) Pat, tell me what is going on in there.

P26: (No response.)

T27: (Long pause, perhaps five minutes.) Pat, what's going on? See if you can talk to me about what you are experiencing.

This intense implosion must be holding something back. If this much energy is needed to hold the impasse, the retroflected aggression must be tremendous. The immediate problem is to get some movement going. It is clear that the suggestion (T25) to pick an external target for the aggression is totally unacceptable for Pat. Being outwardly aggressive just doesn't fit her "as if" behavior. She is behaviorally willing to do real violence to herself rather than

let any of the aggression out. The split in her personality is marked, the aggressive qualities alienated and unaccepted.

P27: (No response. The implosion is continuing.)

T28: (Taking Pat gently by the arm, therapist lifts Pat to her feet.) Pat, will you come with me for a minute? I want you to come over here to this side of the room. I want you to be the objective rational part of your head for a minute. Look at those two characters over there. Tell me what they are doing.

The purpose of this move is to initiate some degree of movement and to give Pat a bit of distance from the intense impasse.

P28: (Starts to sob loudly.) They're fighting. They're tearing each other apart. (To the pillows representing the two parts of herself.) Stop that! (Yelling now.) Stop that! Stop that! You're killing me. (Pat collapses to the floor, sobbing freely to herself.) You're killing me. You're killing me. You're tearing me apart.

T29: Be one of the parts. Be the more aggressive part, tearing the other part apart.

P29: I'll kill you. I am killing you. You bitch. (Pat begins to hit the pillow, grabs it and tears it.) Take that! I'm going to kill you, I'm tearing you apart. I want to hurt you, make you suffer. You ugly bitch.

T30: All right now, Pat, switch and be the side getting hit.

P30: You're killing me, you're tearing me apart. You're hurting me. (Pat falls forward into the pillow and sobs heavily to herself, then is silent for perhaps a minute and a half.)

Pat begins to melt the impasse. There is a developing dialogue between the two elements of the polarity. Each is getting full expression. Therapeutically the encouraging development is the movement, the freeing of the impasse and the implosion. The anger and the tears, accompanied by the physical yelling and activity are flowing explosivity.

T31: Pat, what's happening now?

P31: (Softly): They've stopped fighting now.

T32: Well, what are they doing?

P33: They're making love.

T34: Go with that, let this develop. Let them make love and see what develops.

P34: One is me. No, both are me, only one is male and one is female. Now I'm the male and I'm making love to her.

T35: Let the male part talk to the female part.

P35 (male): I don't want to hurt you any more. I . . . (pause) . . . I . . . I love you. I don't want to hurt you. Why don't you let me love you?

T36: Switch.

P36: (Pat switches, lays on the floor in the position of a woman making love. She bursts into flowing crying.) I hear you. I accept your love. (Cries loudly for several minutes, then speaks to therapist.) I love myself. I love myself. I don't like to hurt me anymore, I don't have to do it. I don't have to hurt myself anymore. I love me and I can accept it. I can accept that I love me. I can really hear myself love me and I can really accept it. This is wonderful. I never believed it before.

By helping Pat enter the impasse, as frightening and as difficult as it was, both of the elements of the polarity are developed. The "I" comes to sense itself, not as only one or the other, but as both. Pat comes to experience herself as doing something to herself, not just as the victim of some action. But she goes farther. She arrives at the point at which the two elements begin to talk with each other. They become authentic for each other. The anger and hurting becomes love. Where self-torture once was, now self-love is. Pat experiences as "I" both the pickee and the picker, the male and

the female. She is both, but she is also something more. Her "I" includes and transcends the dialogue of these two elements of the fragmenting self. Her awareness transcends and integrates what had been split apart. In this work, her death-like implosion melts away. The antagonism of these components of her personality dies and in their place a new self is born, an "I" which is in dialogue with itself.

Chapter 4

RELIGIOUS PROCESS IN THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL

In the context of this study, religious process refers to a specific religious process which is contained in the theology of the Apostle Paul. The intent of this chapter is to develop an understanding of the religious process which Paul describes, and to do so in a way which is compatible with a contemporary world view.

Paul's language is strange to contemporary ears, drawing on the presuppositions of a different time and a different world. His is an ancient cosmology, a world filled with strange gods and demons which might possess the unwary. Much of his thought appears offensive to a humanistically oriented mind. The question necessarily comes to a critical reader, "is Paul merely speaking in terms of an obsolete view of reality, or is there deeper significance to his thought? Does he penetrate to a dimension of reality which continues to have relevance and impact today?"

The intent of this chapter is heavily supported by the exegetical method of Rudolf Bultmann.¹ Bultmann's method of "de-mythologizing" involves an intellectual translation of Paul's thought into contemporary categories. It removes the purely mythological elements from Paul's thought, rendering it in its existential purity. To the

¹Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

degree that Bultmann succeeds, Paul becomes both understandable and relevant.

A PRELUDE TO PAUL

As he emerges in Bultmann's interpretation, Paul gives us a magnificent analysis of the fragmentation of existence, and of the process through which the individual is rescued from the futile attempt to determine his/her own being. At the outset, it is useful to place Paul in the context of his own time, and to outline several basic issues which have bearing on his work.

An Historical Note

Paul speaks with a sense of immediacy. For him, the Spirit is actual and present in his life in a determinative way. This immediacy and the urgency with which he speaks are born out of the events of his own life. The story of his conversion is well known, but Bultmann gives it existential clarity when he considers what it must have meant for a "zealot for the law" to give up the law.

Not having been a personal disciple of Jesus, he [Paul] was won to the Christian faith by the kerygma of the Hellenistic Church. The question thrust upon him by this kerygma was whether he was willing to regard the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, whom the kerygma asserted to have risen from the dead, as the expected Messiah. But for Paul, the fervent champion . . . of the traditions of the fathers (Gal. 1:14) straightway recognizing how basically the Torah was called into question by the Hellenistic mission, that meant whether he was willing to acknowledge in the cross of Christ God's judgement upon his self-understanding up to that time--i.e. God's condemnation of his Jewish striving after righteousness by fulfilling the works of the Law. After he had indignantly rejected this question and became a persecutor

of the Church, at his conversion he submitted to this judgment of God.

For this is what his conversion meant: In it he surrendered his previous understanding of himself; i.e. he surrendered what had till then been the norm and meaning of his life, he sacrificed what had hitherto been his pride and joy (Phil. 3:4-7).²

This entails a complete reversal of self-understanding and values. It is not necessary to define what happened at the conversion in materialistic terms. It is enough for our present purposes to know that something happened which turned his life around. This something is actual for Paul. It resulted in dramatic changes in his way of thought and action. Spirit for Paul is not abstract. On the contrary, it is so close as to be clutching his very life. Paul then does not write with objective distance as a dispassionate observer. He writes with the intense passion of a fervent participant.

Paul and Christ

Paul describes religious process as a transforming process, a movement from death to life, from sin to salvation, from disbelief to faith. In this process, the world and the actual individuals which comprise it, are changed. The process is made possible by God's saving action which is visible in the cross and resurrection of Jesus as the Christ. Paul proclaims the actuality of death and rebirth made possible through the Christ.

²Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 187.

But the Christ is important for Paul as a manifestation of God's saving action rather than as a human teacher. Paul is interested in the fact that Jesus lived, was crucified, and was resurrected. It is in these facts of death and rebirth that the Christ, the Messiah, is visible, and not in the teachings of the Rabbi of Nazareth. For Paul himself, the truth of the resurrection is evidenced in the impact of the Spirit upon his own life. He is converted, not when he first hears the story of the death and resurrection. The first hearing turned him into a persecutor of the Church. He is converted when the Spirit grasps his life and turns it around. The Spirit and its power are existential realities for Paul, not merely an ideology, an act of performance.

The Christ is an actual influence, a power in his life made known by its effect on his life. He calls "the Christ" that influence upon his behavior which resulted in his radical change in self-understanding. And when he speaks of the Christ, he may also refer to the historical Jesus, but never without a sharp sense of the power which is actual in his life.

Bultmann notes from this observation that Paul's Christology is very closely tied to his anthropology; that is, his notion of Christ is closely integrated with his notion of how the Christ affects actual human individuals. Some of Paul's Christological language is borrowed from the more speculative systems of gnosticism and the mystery religions and appears to be highly metaphysical. But for Paul, Christ is actual and present in the lives of individual human

persons.³

Paul and God

Paul's interest in God is not that of a speculative theologian, contemplating the immutable face of the unknowable. Paul is concerned with God only as God is concerned with humankind. He is interested in God where God is relevant to human life. For this reason, Paul's anthropology, his doctrine of human nature is very close to his doctrine of God.

. . . Pauline theology is not a speculative system. It deals with God not as He is in Himself but only with God as He is significant for man, for man's responsibility and man's salvation. Correspondingly, it does not deal with the world and man as they are in themselves, but constantly sees the world and man in their relation to God. Every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa. For this reason and in this sense Paul's theology is at the same time, anthropology.⁴

For the purposes of our study, religious process is represented primarily as a dimension of human experience. This is not meant to exclude the trans-personal dimension from the definition, but rather to give the present study focus and clear limits. This limitation is in keeping with Paul's own orientation as outlined above.

Paul and Existential Philosophy

Because Paul is concerned with human experience, his thought is very amenable to an existential analysis. While it may be going

³*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴*Ibid.*

too far to describe Paul as an existential thinker, his use of his own experience, his emphasis on God as related to individuals, and his emphasis on an understanding of human nature gives his thought an existential flavor. Bultmann is consistent with Paul's intent when he strives to understand him existentially.

BULTMANN'S UNDERSTANDING OF PAUL

In existential terms, Paul gives us a statement of the fragmentation of human existence and the process through which the essential unity is recovered. In Paul's own language, he describes God's saving action which brings to an end the old eon in which the power of sin ruled triumphant; and announces the birth of the new eon in which God reconciles the individual to himself. Bultmann describes the effect of God's action as the movement from "man prior to the revelation of faith" to "man under faith."

An Overview

For Paul, the Christ event marks the division between the old and the new. In the old eon, sin ruled. In human existence under sin, the self becomes divided against itself. Under the fragmentation of sin, the individual is unable to determine his/her own action and lives helpless to recover the essential unity of self and self. The "wages" of this "divorce" within the self is "death." Individual efforts to overcome death are futile and only lead to death again. The attempt to overcome the domination of sin and death is a hallmark

of sin and the attempt itself preserves it.

It is God's saving action, given as a gift, which comes to the individual, restoring life. God's action answers the dilemma of human existence in the religious process of dying and being "reborn anew in Christ." But the sense of unity which is restored to human existence is not a return to a "pre-fragmented" existence. It is, rather, a "new creation" (Gal. 6:15). Paul expresses this "new creation" in terms of being grasped by the Spirit; being determined by the Spirit, so that he can say, ". . . I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; . . ." (Gal. 2:20). This sense of human existence as fragmented and limited and powerless, and the saving action of God is expressed vividly in the following passage:

I can will what is right, but I can not do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

. . . the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do. . . . (Rom. 7:18 RSV)

In this passage Paul contrasts the "I" which does evil to the "I" which does not want it. He contrasts the "I" of the "inmost self" to the "I" of the "law of sin." The unity of the self is fragmented into warring "I's," each claiming to speak for the whole. For Paul the term "I" does not mean the unity of the person. It is the "I"

fragmented and at war with itself.

With this overview in mind, a more detailed examination of Bultmann's approach to Paul may be made, and an existential explanation of the terms attempted.

Man Prior to Faith

What is it that gives human existence such a disruption between the "I" and the "not-I?" Bultmann approaches this question with a meticulous analysis of Paul's anthropological terminology. For the purposes of this study, a complete review of Paul's lexicon is not necessary. A consideration of the basic terms gives us an adequate understanding of his thought. The most important of these terms are *soma* (body), sin, death, and flesh.

Soma. To be *soma* means to have physical actuality, but it also means to have a quality of self-relatedness. *Soma* is body in the limited sense of the physical body, but Bultmann argues that more importantly, *soma* is the property of self-relatedness which is characteristic of human experience.⁵ It refers to the dialogic nature of human awareness. *Soma* is the individual's givenness to him/herself; it is the ground of self-awareness. It also describes the possibility of a split within the self, an existence where self split from self becomes alienated and foreign. But even in this self-alienation, *soma* does not imply a gnostic dualism, a soul or true self imprisoned within

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 195.

a physical body.⁶ The essential unity of body and soul, and the essential unity of the self are affirmed in Paul's thought.⁷ Nevertheless, the property of *soma* which is self-relating is integral to human existence. In this sense an individual does not have a body, a *soma*, but is *soma*.⁸

. . . man is called soma in respect to his being able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as the subject to whom something happens. He can be called soma, that is, as having a relationship to himself--as being able in a certain sense to distinguish himself from himself . . .⁹

Insofar as man is soma and thereby has a relationship to himself, he can distinguish himself from himself, and he will do this all the more as he experiences outside powers trying to wrest him out of his own control or even having done so. Then the temptation exists to let the perceived separation between himself and himself become a divorce--to misunderstand his relationship to himself as that between his self and a totally foreign being, a 'not-I.'¹⁰

It is in recognition of the possibility of inner divorce that Paul writes, ". . . if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me." Here the divorce within the self has become an alienation, a complete break within the self between the "doer" and the phenomenological "I."

Sin. Sin is the divorce within an individual's existence which is the consequence of somatic self-relatedness becoming too radicalized. Sin is inner fragmentation of willing and doing, of

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 199.

experience and behavior. In describing sin, Bultmann writes:

. . . 'I and I,' self and self are at war with each other; i.e. to be innerly divided, or not to be at one with one's self, is the essence of human existence under sin.

This inner dividedness means that man himself destroys his true self. In his self-reliant will to be himself, a will that comes to light in 'desire' at the encounter with the 'commandment,' he loses his self and 'sin' becomes the active subject within him (Rom. 7:9). Thereby the self--the 'I'--dies; selfhood, of course belongs to the nature of man, and it is just the 'commandment,' given 'for life,' that ought to bring his selfhood to reality. Man fails to achieve it by attempting self-reliantly to realize it in 'desire.' In this false will toward selfhood man's destination to be a self--his will toward 'life'--is pervertedly preserved; that is just the reason why it is possible to describe human existence as the struggle between 'self' and 'self' within a man. In the fact that man is a self--that he is a being to whom what matters and should matter is his 'life,' his self--lies the possibility of sin. In the fact that God's commandment is meant to give man 'life' lies the possibility of misunderstanding: Man, called to selfhood, tries to live out of his own strength and thus loses his self--his 'life'--and rushes into death. This is domination of sin: All man's doing is directed against his true intention--viz. to achieve life.¹¹

Human existence contains a paradox. Under the impact of God's "commandment" the legitimate pursuit of his existence is "life." Yet if he uses his own resources to achieve life, he does not achieve "life" at all, but rather its opposite, "death." For death is the "sting" of sin.

Death. In Paul's terminology, death is both the physical death of the body, and the more existential death of the spirit. It is a "lifeless" existence, an existence of continual striving, of fragmentation, of conformity to external criteria and demands (laws).

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 245.

In fragmentation under sin, the self and the self are at war. It is ". . . the false assumption of receiving life not as the gift of the Creator but procuring it by one's own power, of living from one's self rather than from God."¹²

Bultmann sees the Pauline terms "sin" and "death" as describing a situation in which the self is so fragmented that it is no longer an existential unity. In its war with itself, it defeats itself, condemning itself to contradiction. The common saying, "I could have kicked myself," may reflect this condition. "I" and "myself" are separated, the one acting on the other; the unity of the self fragmented into the "actor" and the "victim." In the divorce of sin, the "I" identifies with either actor or victim; it simultaneously alienates the other for that moment. Thus, under sin, the self or the "I" may be either actor or victim, but may not represent the "self" which is their ultimate unity.

The self is fragmented. The "I" no longer speaks for the unity of the "doer" and the "done to," but rather only for one or the other at any given moment. In this condition, the "I" assumes that it can live out of its own resources, but it draws only on the resources of the fragment of the whole with which it is identified. The house divided against itself cannot stand. Thus the quest for life by the efforts of the self do not bring life, but death. Any action undertaken from such a divided self is not a unitary action.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 232.

It is, in Paul's terms, "walking according to the flesh."

Flesh. "As a modifier of verbs, the phrase . . . (according to the flesh) . . . stamps an existence or an attitude not as natural-human, but as sinful."¹³ Bultmann demonstrates that Paul's use of the term *Sarx* (flesh) is not a "mythological concept" as if the power of sin or the "law of Sin" were some demonic being which takes possession of the body.¹⁴ Similarly, the phrase "according to the flesh" does not refer solely to sexual passion and desire for pleasure, but more inclusively, to any attitude which places the temporal and the finite in the place of the infinite, or which sets the world in the place of God, or the creation in the place of the Creator.¹⁵

Flesh does refer to an individual's corporeality, his/her physical body, but more importantly, it refers to his/her "outwardness," or visibility.¹⁶ In this sense it is contrasted to inwardness or privacy. "The flesh," or "according to the flesh," refers to the realm of public behavior, the realm of appearances. It is what one person looking at another might see as opposed to the inwardness of the "heart." The realm of the flesh is the realm of extrinsic motivations and strivings.

. . . the contrast in II Cor. 5:12 to 'priding one's self on a man's heart' is 'priding one's self on appearance' . . . i.e. on his externally visible merits; but that means glorifying 'after the flesh' (II Cor. 11:18 KJ); 'boasting of worldly things' (RSV). Hence all that is 'outward' and 'visible,' all

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 232-48.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 234.

that has its nature in external 'appearance' belongs to the sphere of 'flesh.' . . .

. . . the meaning of 'in the flesh' becomes clear in the fact that it corresponds antithetically to the formula 'in the Spirit,' in which Spirit means the miraculous, life-giving power of God; its territory is the 'hidden interior' . . . the 'unseen,' the 'heart.'

'In the flesh'--i.e. in the sphere of the obvious, or the earthly-human, or the natural--takes place in man's 'living' (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:22), or 'walking' (II Cor. 10:3) . . .¹⁷

Thus when an individual "walks according to the flesh" in Paul's thought, he/she is attempting to live a life according to appearances. Insofar as all individuals are "in the flesh" they are subject to sin. What then becomes crucial to Paul is their attitude toward the flesh. He contrasts "in flesh" with "according to the flesh."¹⁸ While all individuals must live "in flesh" they are not bound to live "according to the flesh." To live "according to the flesh" means to live "as if" the source and ultimate meaning of life was the realm of appearances. To live according to the flesh means that one is more concerned with how he/she appears than with how and what he/she *is*. Bultmann describes this distinction in Paul's thought:

. . . the crucial question is whether 'in flesh' only denotes the stage and the possibilities for a man's life or the determinative norm for it--whether a man's life '*in* flesh' is also life '*according* to the flesh'--or, again, whether the sphere of the natural-earthly, which is also that of the transitory and perishable, is the world out of which a man thinks he derives his life and by means of which he thinks he maintains it. This self-delusion is not merely an error, but sin, because it is a turning away from the Creator, the giver of life, and a turning toward the creation--and to do that is to trust in one's self as being able to procure life by the use of the earthly and through one's own strength and accomplishments.¹⁹

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

Bultmann's phrase "trust in one's self" as descriptive of sin refers to trust in that "I" which, through the divorce of sin, has become so fragmented that it is at war with itself. To trust in this self is to trust in the fragment and to ignore the whole. To trust in this way is to "walk according to the flesh." It is to trust in one's own resources when they are fragmented and divided. It is to give one's self to an existence of alienation and distortion. It is to live for the appearance, the outwardly, rather than to live for the "inner" or the "heart." The wages of such a choice are "death."

When viewed in this way, Paul's statement, ". . . if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me," takes on new meaning. Paul is attempting to describe an existence marked by inner fragmentation. He is contrasting an "I" which is identified with "doing" to an "I" which identifies the totality of his being, the "inner man." The sin of which he speaks is not a mysterious demon possessing him, but rather the potential of his own consciousness to become fragmented and of his self to war with itself. The separation of thought and action, body and mind, intent and behavior, are the results of sin, of being in a state of inner fragmentation. They are the reflection of an "I" which does not speak with the authority of the total being. They are the reflection of an "I" which is not the "inner man," but only an "I" which is the voice of a fragment of the self, one aspect alienating itself from the whole.

Man Under Faith

The paradox of human existence prior to faith is that, under the impact of God's commandment, the legitimate pursuit of an individual is "life," but if an individual attempts to undertake such a pursuit with his/her own resources, "life" is lost and "death" found, for the self is fragmented and destroyed.

The religious process which Paul describes is a process through which this paradox is resolved. It is God's action, given to man in Jesus as the Christ, which makes the resolution of the paradox an actual possibility. What is required of an individual is that he/she give up the attempt to attain life through the efforts of the self, and instead seek life through God.

Paul describes this process in terms of the "righteousness of God," "grace," "reconciliation," and "salvation." It is a process of dying and being reborn in Christ. The old self of sin, fragmented and distorted, vainly seeking life, dies; it surrenders itself to God, and in its place a new self is born, a self which does not live out of its own efforts, but out of God. Paul writes, ". . . it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; . . ." (Gal. 2:20), and "the death he died, he died to sin" (Rom. 6:10).

Bultmann summarizes this process as the movement from existence prior to faith to existence under faith:

. . . If pre-faith man is man fallen into the power of death, man under faith is man who receives life. If man's death has its cause in the fact that man in his striving

to live out of his own resources loses his self, life arises out of surrendering one's self to God, thereby gaining one's self.²⁰

The righteousness of God. God's saving action which resolves the human dilemma, is his "righteousness," or as Bultmann puts it, his "right-wising."²¹

In attempting to understand Paul's meaning of "righteousness," Bultmann again turns to a careful analysis of Paul's usage. He notes that Paul uses "righteousness" in the context of a specific Jewish tradition in which it is a "forensic-eschatological" term, referring to righteousness before the law and the righteousness of the day to come.

Paul differs from that tradition at several points apparent in Paul's view of God's "right-wising" action as a present reality. In its traditional use, "righteousness" is viewed primarily as a future event, while for Paul it is also a present reality.²² "Righteousness" for Paul does not mean the "ethical qualities of man," but rather, "his relation to God."²³ By shifting the concept of "righteousness" from obedience to the law as the condition for receiving life as it was understood in the traditional formulations, to "righteousness" as a present relation with God made possible in and through Jesus Christ, Paul both preserves the older tradition, and departs from it. Bultmann states:

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 270.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 274ff.

²¹*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, p. 277.

At this point it is of basic importance to comprehend that by his thesis that *righteousness is a present reality* Paul, nevertheless, does not rob it of its *forensic-eschatological meaning*. The paradoxicality of his assertion is this: God already pronounces His eschatological verdict (over the man of faith) in the present; the eschatological event is already present reality, or, rather, is beginning in the present. Therefore, the righteousness which God adjudicates to man (the man of faith) is not 'sinlessness' in the sense of ethical perfection, but is 'sinlessness' in the sense that God does not 'count' man's sin against him (II Cor. 5:19).²⁴

The contrast between Paul and Judaism, then, is not that each has a different conception of righteousness as a forensic-eschatological entity. Rather, the immediate contrast is that what for the Jews is a *matter of hope* is for Paul a *present reality*--or, better, is also a present reality.²⁵

Paul is at variance with the Jewish tradition also in his understanding of the conditions for salvation, or being "right-wised." Bultmann states:

. . . the Jew takes it for granted that this condition is keeping the Law, the accomplishment of 'works' prescribed by the Law. In direct contrast to this view Paul's thesis runs--to consider the negative aspect first: '*without works of the Law.*' After the demonstration, Rom. 1:18-3:20, that Gentiles and Jews are fallen under sin has ended with 'No human being will be justified ("right-wised") in his (God's) sight by works of the Law,' the next verse enters like a new theme stating the thesis: 'But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law,' and after a short discussion v. 28 sums it up: 'For we hold that a man is justified (right-wised) by faith apart from works of law' . . .²⁶

In attempting to understand Paul's position, it must be remembered that sin means to be inwardly divided, self against self. Paul's thesis that works of Law cannot be the condition for being "right-wised" then means that an individual cannot attain "life" and restore his/her inward unity by any action of one of the "I" fragments alone.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 276.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 278.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 279.

To attempt this merely exacerbates the antagonism. Restoration or healing can occur only through faith. Faith comes, not from good works, but as the gift of God; His "right-wising" act. "Righteousness, then cannot be won by human effort, nor does any human accomplishment establish a claim to it; it is sheer gift."²⁷

God's saving action gives life to the individual through faith, and faith itself is also a gift of God. God's saving action, His "grace," is accomplished in Christ. God's grace is not a new benevolent attitude toward humans on God's part.²⁸ It is rather, a specific act, taking place in the world, in the continuum of historical time and action, by which God reconciles mankind to Himself.

The deed of divine grace consists in the fact that God gave Christ up to die on the cross; . . . *The salvation-occurrence, then, includes the death and the resurrection of Jesus.*²⁹

Above all, "righteousness" is nothing that "I" does. Righteousness is God's gift to the "I."

Walking by the Spirit. If sin results in the fragmentation of the personality so that self wars with self, and the individual is helpless to achieve liberation by his/her own efforts, and if this mode of existence is "walking according to the flesh," then "walking by the Spirit" is the opposite. For the individual it is a letting go of all efforts at self-salvation, a dying and being reborn in Christ. Paul states:

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 280.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 288ff.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 292.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them . . . (II Cor. 5:17).

Clearly, for Paul, to be "in Christ" is the "way to life." It involves giving up being somewhere else, specifically in sin. "The old has passed away, behold, the new has come." This sense of death and rebirth is characteristic of Paul's understanding of himself. According to Bultmann:

At any rate, one thing is clear: Paul can speak of Christ as 'the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me' only as the Paul who has waived his own righteousness and given up his self (his 'I') to die (Gal. 2:19f.; Phil. 3:4-11).³⁰

For Paul, the one who is "in Christ" is initiated into that brotherhood through the rite of baptism. The rite is a mark of his decision for or against Christ. The ritual has its emphasis, at least in Bultmann's understanding of Paul, on the "decision-question."³¹ The believer is at once asked to decide the truth or fallacy of the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection, and at the same time, must decide either to allow his/her old self-understanding to die, or to continue to strive to attain his/her life through self-efforts.

Salvation event. Bultmann interprets Paul's understanding of the "salvation-event" as being a creative synthesis of Jewish "juristic-sacrificial" thought, mystery religion, and gnosticism, but

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

transcending them all.

From Jewish juristic-sacrificial thought Paul took two elements: That of propitiatory sacrifice and vicarious sacrifice. From the point of view of propitiatory sacrifice, Christ's death is the means, the price, through which the forgiveness of sins is brought about. It is the culticly demanded sacrificial price, paid by God himself, for man's sin. As a vicarious sacrifice, in this strand of thought, all persons vicariously die with Christ. They die to the powers of the old eon which are law, sin, and death. This idea of vicarious sacrifice, all individuals dying with Christ, in conjunction with the idea of propitiatory sacrifice, break through the traditional categories of the cultic-juristic thought: "Christ's death is not merely a sacrifice which cancels the guilt of sin . . . but is also the means of release from the powers of this age: Law, Sin, and Death."³²

The next major element Bultmann detects in the synthesis forged by Paul is the element in which ". . . Paul describes Christ's death in analogy with the death of a divinity of the mystery religions."³³ In these traditions the initiate participates in the death and rebirth of the mystery god. By analogy, the Christian participates in Christ's death and resurrection. Christ's death is a death to Sin. ("The death he died, he died to sin . . ." Rom. 6:10.) But in the mystery traditions, the death and revival is repeated through

³²*Ibid.*, p. 297.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 298.

time without change. For Paul, God's saving act is a single event--not a cycle of repetition. Paul breaks through these categories by means of the third major element, the Gnostic Redeemer myth as a cosmic event.

In the light of this myth, the Christ is seen by Paul as having a cosmic significance. The pre-existing Logos is incarnated, dies and is reborn. In this act, the end of the old eon is proclaimed and brought to conclusion, and the beginning of the new eon is proclaimed and initiated. In God's saving act in Christ, the entire structure of existence is transformed. Thus in Paul's synthesis of these three elements, the death and resurrection of Christ is viewed in terms of the three major elements, Jewish juristic thought, the mystery religions, and the Gnostic redeemer myths. But it is viewed in such a way so as to transcend them all. His death and resurrection do pay the price of redeeming man's sin, and it does grant all men a participation in the freedom from the domination of the powers of this old eon, and simultaneously, it both proclaims and affects the end of that old eon and the beginning of the new. As Adam's act cast mankind into sin, so Christ brings mankind into the new creation.

But how does this new creation come into an individual's existence; how is it made experientially accessible? Again Paul's answer is synthetic. Partly it is through participation in the rites of baptism and the Lord's supper, and partly it is through the individual's decision to give up his/her old understanding of self and surrender self to Christ. But the ability to do this is made possible

through God's Grace, manifest in the proclamation of the World, that is in the preaching of the Gospel. Encounter with the Gospel results in precipitation of a "decision-question." The individual must decide for or against Christ. He/she must either choose to live out of his/her own resources and continue to pay the price of death and sin, or he/she must choose to give up that attempt and to give him/herself to Christ and live in and through Him.

Faith. From this perspective, the possibility of redemption is present only where the gospel is preached.³⁴ Bultmann distinguishes two acts of faith in Paul. The first act of faith or of "faith-belief" is simply the "willingness to consider true (believe) the facts reported of the pre-existent Son of God--incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection from the dead--and to see in them a demonstration of the grace of God."³⁵ The second act of faith is the willingness of an individual to surrender the attempt to live his life out of his own resources, to give up his attempt at self-creation and to live in and through Christ. In Paul these two acts of faith become one act in the proclamation of the gospel. The salvation occurrence, as an occurrence within the realm of human experience, is "nowhere present except in the proclaiming, accosting, demanding, and promising word of preaching."³⁶

Faith is the condition of receiving righteousness. It is ". . . the attitude of man in which he receives the gift of 'God's

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 302.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 300.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 302.

righteousness' and in which the divine deed of salvation accomplishes itself . . ."³⁷ Bultmann interprets Paul as understanding faith "primarily as obedience." Obedience here is obedience to Christ, to his death and to his rebirth. It demands of the individual the complete "reversal of the direction his will has previously had." It is a surrender of self-understanding and the attempt to create an illusion of good appearances. The believer is not determined by his "I" but by God. The "I" of sin dies and is replaced by the sustaining power of the saving event. Bultmann describes this change:

. . . [to be in Christ] . . . denotes not, to be sure, an individual mystical relationship to Christ, but the fact that the individual actual life of the believer, living not out of himself but out of the divine deed of salvation, is determined by Christ. It makes no difference whether Paul speaks of the believer's being in Christ or of Christ's being in the believer

. . . For to have died with Christ--as the believer has--means 'that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin' (Rom. 6:6) . . . Correspondingly, he describes 'gaining Christ and being found in him' as the state of being completely determined by the salvation-occurrence; for that is the force of the words: 'That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death' (Phil. 3:10).³⁸

Obedience to the Christ means participation in the transforming event of his death and resurrection. It is contrasted with the creation of the appearance of the participation.

Bultmann notes the temptation to misinterpret Paul's concept of faith-as-obedience as meaning a new law, a new saving work. But he distinguishes the obedience of faith from an accomplishment by

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 314.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 328.

virtue of the transformation of the "I" or will.

As true obedience, 'faith' is freed from the suspicion of being an accomplishment, a 'work.' As an accomplishment it would not be obedience, since in an accomplishment the will does not surrender but asserts itself; in it, a merely formal renunciation takes place in that the will lets the content of its accomplishment be dictated by an authority lying outside of itself, but precisely in so doing thinks it has a right to be proud of its accomplishment. 'Faith'--the radical renunciation of accomplishment, the obedient submission to the God--determined way of salvation, the taking over of the cross of Christ--is a free deed of obedience in which the new self constitutes itself in place of the old. As this sort of decision, it is a deed in the true sense: In a true deed the doer himself is inseparable from it, while in a 'work' he stands side by side with what he does.³⁹

Hence, an essential aspect of faith as obedience is the transformation of the structure of the personality so that the deed and doer, the act and actor are not cleft.

A second element of faith is that it is confession. Confession and belief correspond to each other. In faith-as-confession, the individual both confesses his belief in God's saving act, and confesses his/her self. The individual "turns away" from the old self-understanding, and comes to see the new self as being "in and through" God.

As faith is the condition of God's righteousness, its result is life. The present reality of life is manifest in the believer's freedom from sin, freedom from the law, and freedom from death. The believer, the "man of faith," understands him/herself to exist not out of the efforts of the self in its dividedness, but out of the

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 316.

power of God. Nor is the act of faith a once and for all accomplishment of the believer.

Rather, *it determines one's living in its manifold historical reality*, and there is no moment in which the man of faith is released from the obedience of constantly living out of the 'grace' of God.⁴⁰

Faith is a decision which must be made over and over, every time one attempts to achieve one's being through the efforts of the "I" divided against itself. Faith is a human attitude, but it is not a human creation. Faith is possible for an individual because of God's saving action.

Freedom. The consequence of faith for the individual is freedom. The freedom Paul describes is not so much "freedom to . . ." as it is "freedom from." Especially, Paul sees freedom from sin, freedom from the law, and freedom from death as God's gift to the believer.

1. *Freedom from sin.* Freedom from sin is not freedom from the possibility of sin, but freedom from the compulsion to sin. Prior to faith and God's saving action, human existence was condemned to sin. The individual had no option but to sin. Under faith the individual has gained, through God's action, the freedom not to sin, that is, the freedom not to destroy oneself in a fragmenting attempt to gain life.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 324.

Faith's obedient submission to God's 'grace' the acceptance of the cross of Christ, is the surrender of man's old understanding of himself, in which he lives 'unto himself,' tries to achieve life by his own strength, and by that very fact falls victim to the powers of sin and death and loses himself. Therefore, 'faith'--as 'obedience of faith'--is also released from these powers. The new self-understanding which is bestowed with 'faith' is that of *freedom*, in which the believer gains life and thereby his own self.⁴¹

This does not mean that the believer is freed from the possibility of sin. He/she is not "sinless" in the sense of being incapable of sin, but only in the sense that the sin of the past is not held against him/her, and that, through Christ, God's grace gives the gift of life. But to maintain sinlessness requires that the individual continue to choose to surrender him/herself to God. Human existence is always somatic existence and as such, it contains the possibility for self-division and inner divorce. At each moment this occurs, the individual is faced again with the decision question, either to seek life through individual efforts, the fragmented "I" manipulating the fragmented "I" toward an impossible salvation, or to surrender the self to God, and through God find life.

(Freedom) . . . is not a decisionless capacity henceforth to do the good only--which would itself be a capacity of nature and hence also a supernatural compulsion. 'Sinlessness' is not a magical guarantee against the possibility of sin--the believer, too must beware of the 'tempter'--but the release from the compulsion of sin. Freedom from sin consists in the possibility, once flung away, of realizing the commandment's intent to bestow life.⁴²

This understanding of freedom from sin has implications for Paul's understanding of the Spirit. Spirit is not a "power" which

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 332.

takes possession of an individual. It is, rather, a possibility for life which works in and through the individual's own choice of self-surrender. The Spirit is the transcending self: It is an "I" which understands itself to be living out of the source of all life, the very ground of existence. When Paul writes, ". . . not I who live, but Christ who lives in me . . ." he refers to this concept of Spirit.

. . . Paul's thought of the Spirit is understood aright . . . when the Spirit is conceived of, not as a mysterious power working with magical compulsion, but as the new possibility of genuine human life which opens up to him who has surrendered his old understanding of himself, letting himself be crucified with Christ, in order to experience the 'power of his resurrection.'⁴³

The "power of his resurrection" is the possibility of authentic life and integrated functioning. It is the possibility of an individual coming to understand him/herself, not as the fragmented "I" of sin, but as the "I" of life, living in God's grace.

2. *Freedom from the law.* Freedom from the law is freedom from the compulsion to earn righteousness by obedience to a set of external standards. It is the freedom from the demand to appear worthy of God's grace by conforming to culticly prescribed behavior. In short, freedom from the law is freedom from the need to create an illusion of goodness, an appearance of worthiness. Christ is the end of the power of the law. This may be understood as Christ being the end of the demand that one appear to be a certain way. God's grace is not earned, it is not won by accomplishments, but by faith

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 336.

alone. God's grace is won only when the individual is willing to surrender the attempt to earn it by the efforts of the striving self.

The 'power of sin' is 'the Law'--or rather, for believers, it was. For to them, Christ is the 'end of the law' (Rom. 10:4); 'in him' or 'through him' we have freedom from the Law (Gal. 2:4).⁴⁴

It is clear that Christ is the end of the Law so far as it claimed to be the way to salvation or was understood by man as the means of establishing 'his own righteousness' . . .⁴⁵

What replaces the old law as the "power of sin" is the "law of Christ."

And the 'law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2) is the demand that one love. . . . It is love that requires the Christian not to 'seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor' (I Cor. 10:24; 13:5). Love is the fulfillment of the Law, whose demands are summed up in 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).⁴⁶

3. *Freedom from death.* It is clear that Paul expected an eschatological day in which the dead would be raised. In addition, Paul also speaks of freedom from death as a gift of God in more purely existential terms which are more pertinent to this study. Through faith it is possible to seek life without bringing death upon oneself. Prior to faith, the attempt to seek life resulted in death because the self became split. In faith, the self may surrender itself to God, dying and being reborn in Christ. The death described here is not necessarily the death of the physical body, it is also the death of the self. For when God commands life, this means life for the self. And if the self, seeking to fulfill God's commandment,

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 344.

necessarily splits itself, it destroys itself. What is gained is not life, but death.

In faith, the self dies to the old self-understanding, and is reborn in the power of the resurrection. Freedom from death is the freedom from the necessary splitting of the self. The individual may seek life and find life, surrendering the "I" to God's grace in Christ.

PAUL'S THEOLOGY AS RELIGIOUS PROCESS

The interaction of God's saving action with the old eon is religious process. In human experience, this interaction takes the form of encounter with the word; a "decision question." Under the power of sin in the old eon, the individual is fragmented, determined by "flesh." "Walking according to the flesh" means to attempt to gain life by one's own efforts. But since an individual is created and not the Creator, he/she cannot give life, but only the appearance of life. Under sin, "walking according to the flesh" becomes living for appearances, living in a pseudo-world, an "as if" realm. This living for appearances is not life, but death, for the self which strives to save itself by giving itself the appearance of life, destroys itself by dividing itself and making itself the object of its own action. A self which is divided against itself does not give itself life, but the death of fragmentation.

When confronted with the decision-question, the individual is confronted also with the futility of his/her attempts to change his/herself. He/she is confronted with God's command to live, and

simultaneously with the impossibility of meeting that demand by his/her own efforts. At the encounter with the decision-question the individual stands at the paradox of human existence--the demand for life, and the impossibility of meeting that demand through his/her own efforts.

God's saving action comes into this abyss as a gift freely given. In the death and resurrection of Christ, the power of death in the old eon is broken and a new possibility is born. At the moment of decision, the individual has the possibility of dying and being reborn in Christ. His/her old self of sin may be surrendered and, in the transforming and life-giving power of God, he/she may receive life as a "new creation."

The human attitude which is the condition for receiving life is faith. Faith combines the elements of obedience, confession, and hope. Obedience is not obedience to an extrinsic law; rather, it is a transformation of the self so that the will and the act become one. The doer and the deed are integrated. Confession is not the confession of deeds done, it is rather a statement of belief in the actuality of the power of God, and it is a statement of one's existence--"this I am." It penetrates appearance, bringing the believer squarely before God, the source of life.

Because human existence by nature contains the possibility of sin, the decision-question is not a once and for ever decision. Rather, it is a decision of every moment--it is an eternally present decision to derive one's life from God. Thus the individual seeking

life may find it only by participating in the death and resurrection of Christ. He/she may surrender the "I" of the flesh to die and may be reborn, a new creation.

Chapter 5

GESTALT THERAPY IMPASSE RESOLUTION AS RELIGIOUS PROCESS: COMPARISONS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

When the claim is made that Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution is a religious process, it is not made on the basis of the self-understanding of Gestalt Therapy. While there are Gestalt therapists who explicitly view Gestalt Therapy as "religious,"¹ the majority have preferred to write from a humanistic perspective. Rather, the claim is made on the basis of the process itself, the similarity of Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution to religious process as described in the theology of Paul. The claim centers on the assertion that the process described by Paul is the same process described in Gestalt Therapy.

The preceding chapters have attempted to establish those descriptions in the terms and vocabulary each has developed. The intent of the present chapter is to draw a comparison between the two descriptions and to evaluate the assertion that they do in fact describe the same process.

COMPARISONS

Both Gestalt Therapy and the theology of Paul describe processes in which the fragmentation of human existence is overcome

¹ Jack Downing and Robert Marmorstein, *Dreams and Nightmares* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

and a "new creation" emerges. We have reviewed these two descriptions of process as "impasse resolution" and "right-wising." Both systems begin with a description of human existence in its fragmented state, and both proceed to describe a transforming process, as well as the general characteristics of the new creation. In both systems, the fragmentation of human existence reflects the fragmenting "I" at the limit of its resources, attempting to create itself out of its own resources, and failing.

Gestalt Therapy

In Gestalt Therapy, fragmenting existence is termed neurosis. In neurosis, the personality is split, and the unity of the organism/environment field is lost. The "I" is fragmented, its elements in conflict with each other. In this fragmented state, the "I" attempts to determine or create the personality according to a set of criteria "introjected" from the environment. By this attempt, the "I" creates an "as if" person, a role which the individual attempts to play out. Existence then takes on the quality of pretense and the individual no longer lives out life, but substitutes the mere playing at a role. Those aspects of the total personality which do not fit the limitations of the role are alienated and held out of awareness. In this state of diminished reality and diminished wholeness, the "I" meets the limits of its resources. This "I" cannot give authentic life, since contact with the actual is diminished, the "I" cannot nourish itself; it cannot create joy and anger, grief and play. It can only

pretend, and create the appearances of these experiences. The impasse occurs when the "I" experiences the limitations of its role and is not yet ready to surrender itself and enter life. The impasse is the result of the fragmented "I's" attempt to change itself and the necessary failure of such an attempt. When the individual meets the limits of the role, (the "as if" personality) he/she is confronted with a choice either to surrender the role and enter life, or to withdraw. The choice to surrender the familiar "I," and to face the unknown requires the willingness to face death. It is the willingness to give up one's old self-understanding; to give up the attempt to create "good" appearances; to be who and what one *is* rather than attempt to create the impression of being something or someone more likely to be appealing.

When the individual is willing to take this leap of faith into the unknown, the impasse is resolved and the individual gains the possibility of authentic life. This life is not simply a return to a state of existence prior to neurotic fragmentation. Rather, it is associated with the emergence of awareness as a "middle-mode" or third way of subject-object relationships, and of the transcending "I." Awareness is an integration of the individual within him/herself and with the environmental field. It is a restructuring of the very nature of the experience continuum. In full awareness the deed and the doer are not split, and the watcher is not separate from the experience. Emerging awareness implies an entire restructuring of the field of experience.

Paul

For Paul, the religious process begins with a consideration of the nature of man. To be human means to be *soma*, body. This holds the possibility of self-relationship, and it also holds the possibility of self-divorce. Human existence is lived under God's commandment to seek life. But in seeking life out of the efforts of the "I" the personality becomes split, fragmented, and it destroys itself. Thus the very attempt to meet the commandment leads to death. The "I" can only attempt to meet the commandment by creating appearances, by living according to outward criteria, for the "I" is not God; it does not have the power to grant life. It only has the power to act "as if" it were what it believes it should be. Paul calls this existence sin and the attempt to create appearances, "walking according to the flesh."

Thus, the human predicament is complete. The individual is obligated by God's commandment to an impossible task. He/she must seek life. If the quest is not undertaken, life is lost. If the quest is undertaken, life is lost also. There is nothing the individual can do to rescue him/herself from this dilemma.

God's saving action, given freely to humankind, resolves this dilemma. God answers the unspoken question of human existence with the process of dying to the old life of fragmentation (sin) and being reborn anew in Christ. This process is not accomplished by human action, but by the "law of the Spirit of life" which "sets me free."

When the individual is confronted with the preaching of the

Word of the gospel, he/she is faced with the futility of efforts of self-creation. The necessary failure of the attempts at self-creation are made apparent and the individual is presented a "decision question." He/she must either decide for the Christ or against him. This decision involves both an intellectual element and an existential one. Intellectually, the individual is called to believe in the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Christ. Existentially, the individual is called to surrender the old understanding of self as attempting to create itself, and to die and be reborn in Christ.

But the life which the individual gains by surrendering the attempt to create him/herself out of the resources of the self, is not simply a return to a prefragmented state of existence, it is a "new creation" (Gal. 6:15). Paul expresses this "new creation" in terms of being grasped by the Spirit, being determined by the Spirit, so that he can write, ". . . I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; . . ." (Gal. 2:20). But the change which is brought about by God's saving action is not only the transformation of the individual's existence, it is also the end of the old eon of sin. It is the beginning of a new eon. In this sense, God's action is understood to be transforming the very structure of reality.

The method of developing comparisons between the description of impasse resolution found in the literature of Gestalt Therapy and the religious process described by Paul is to pair fundamental terms which refer to essential elements of the process. The pairs selected

are: Sin and Neurosis, Decision-question and Impasse, Rightwising and Impasse Resolution.

Sin and Neurosis

The primary characteristic of neurosis is the distortion of the contact functions and the interruption of developing awareness. Without contact the personality becomes fragmented, one part at war with another, and the unity of the organism and the environmental field is destroyed. The organism is out of touch with its environment, the ground of its life. Without contact with the environment, the organism is unable to nourish itself, and in the isolation of neurotic self-inhibition, withers and dies an existential death.

The primary characteristic of sin is the attempt of the "I" to gain life by its own efforts. It becomes divorced within itself, warring with itself, and finds, not life, but death. The self which divides itself destroys itself. The "I" which seeks life through its own efforts is alienated from itself and from God, the source of its life. God is the Creator, the fragmented "I" is not the source of life.

The similarity of these two descriptions of process becomes increasingly clear in a comparison of specific terms.

Soma and ego-function. As demonstrated, Paul's term *soma* connotes that human consciousness has the possibility of self-awareness, or self-relationship. *Soma* refers to the fact that human awareness can act upon itself, it can be both the subject and the

object of its own thought or action. But this very property also holds the possibility of that self-relatedness deteriorating, or becoming so radicalized that it is a "divorce." In divorce the "I" wars with the "I" and the unity of the self is lost. The self which strives to achieve life, divorces itself and finds death. The fragmentation of the self, the divorce, is sin. The wages of sin are death. In the divorce of sin "I" does not contact "I" nor does "I" contact God as the source of life.

To be human holds the possibility of the fragmentation of self, for all human existence is somatic existence, or in Paul's language, "the scripture consigned all things to Sin" (Gal. 3:22).

In Gestalt Therapy the ego functions distinguish between the "I" and the "not-I." Ego is a function of identification and alienation. Whatever is "inside" of the "I-boundary" is experienced as "I" and whatever is "outside" of the "I-boundary" is experienced as "other." In the diminished contact of neurosis, the functions of the ego become distorted; the "I" identifies with introjects and alienates intrinsic parts of the organism. The unity of the field is destroyed. The introjects are experienced as "I" and the alienated parts of the self are experienced as "other."

The parts of the personality which are alienated in neurosis may war with each other as the self may war with itself in sin. The character of this war is devoid of contact and without contact there is no dialogue. Neurosis and sin are possibilities resident in the nature of human consciousness with its reflexive mood. The destruction

of the unity of the organism and the field is accomplished by the distortion of the ego functions with diminished contact. The destruction of the self in sin is accomplished by the distortion of the somatic property of self-relatedness with diminished contact. The results are the same: "I wars with I." This possibility is exemplified in the transcripts of Chapter 3 and in the quotation from Paul (Rom. 7:18).

The "I" under sin may boast of its power, seeking life out of its own resources. In neurosis the fragmented "I" may boast, claiming that it can give happiness. But the "I" of sin and the "I" of neurosis do not speak with the authority of the integrated whole. These "I's" represent the fractured gestalt of the personality, a mere holoïd of the organism. They claim to represent the whole, the integrating gestalt, but they do not. While they bicker with each other, they prevent the emergence of awareness or the impact of the Spirit which can give life.

Flesh and the "as if" person. The "I" under sin walks according to the flesh. This refers not only to the corporeality of the body, but also to the "outwardly," to the realm of appearances. To "walk according to the flesh" is, in this sense, to live according to appearances. For Paul this primarily means obedience to the Law in the attempt to earn righteousness. Justification becomes a matter of conformity to the letter of the law, the creation of the appearance of goodness.

In neurosis, the individual walks "as if" he/she were different

than the actuality, in an attempt to create a role, an appearance of goodness. The law to which the "as if" person conforms is not always the Torah, but it is always some external and unintegrated criterion of goodness. The "as if" person walks according to the flesh, striving to gain righteousness by creating the appearance of goodness and without regard to the inner man or what actually *is*.

In this respect, neurosis is sin, for both preserve the fragmentation of the self or of the personality. Under sin/neurosis, the individual identifies with the role or the appearance. Those aspects of the personality which do not conform to the limits of the role are alienated from the identity. The unity of the field is lost to awareness. The fullest resources of the organismic unity are attenuated. The person walking according to the flesh believes that if he/she can perfect the outward behavior, salvation will be won. But salvation is not won, only death.

Decision-question and Impasse

The life of sin is brought into question when it is confronted with the preaching of the gospel. The fragmentation of the self under sin may go unchallenged and the futility of the attempt to create oneself may go unnoticed in the absence of the preaching of the Word. But when the individual under sin is confronted with the Word of the gospel, he/she is confronted with the sinfulness of his/her existence, and with the possibility of rebirth into life. The gospel "accosts" the sinner, precipitating a decision. The sinner laboring under the

divorce of the self, is confronted with the decision to believe in the Christ and to surrender his/her old understanding of self. In short, to die and be reborn in the Christ. The individual is presented with a sharply defined choice, either to continue to "walk according to the flesh" or to walk in the Spirit. Yet because human existence is somatic existence, it always holds the possibility of divorce within the self. Hence, the decision-question is not a once and for all choice, but must be reaffirmed each time divorce threatens.

In Gestalt Therapy, the impasse occurs whenever the environmental support for the "as if" role is not forthcoming, and the individual is not ready or willing to surrender that role and to allow the emergence of the authentic being. In successful impasse work, the individual is presented with a choice: either to stay at the impasse or to withdraw, to be what he/she is, or to continue the futile attempt to perfect the "as if." The decision-question is precipitated. The impasse is subjectively experienced as the threat of death, for the "as if" person must be surrendered. The "I" which has been identified with the "as if" must be willingly sacrificed and allowed to die, so that the new "I" may emerge.

Rightwising and Impasse Resolution

Rightwising is the process through which the individual is brought to peace with God, the source of life. In this process the individual is called to faith. Faith is the human attitude which accepts God's gift. It is human willingness to surrender the old

self and to be reborn in Christ. Three of the primary marks of faith are obedience, confession, and belief.

Impasse resolution is the process through which the individual is brought to peace with the environmental field, and the "I" with the "I." The human attitude which allows the impasse to resolve itself is the willingness to enter the impasse and to engage it, the willingness to surrender one's attempt to change oneself and to be what one is.

Faith as obedience. The obedience which Paul specifies as the condition of rightwising is conformity to the law of God. This law is the law which is written in the hearts of mankind. It is obedience to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The implications of this obedience for the individual are the willingness to participate in the death and rebirth in Christ, surrendering one's self-understanding and opening one's self to transformation. This is precisely the condition for change in Gestalt Therapy impasse work. The condition is the willingness of the individual to stand at the impasse, "to suffer one's death and be reborn."

This, like the obedience of Paul, is not a "work." If one attempts to resolve the impasse by imitation, the impasse does not resolve itself. It melts only when the individual actually engages the impasse and is transformed.

Faith as confession. In confession, the individual "turns away" from his/her old self-understanding and confesses a new self

which understands itself to be dependent for its life, not on its own efforts, but upon the gift of God. This corresponds to the Gestalt Therapy notion of paradoxical change, for in paradoxical change, the individual "confesses" what he/she *is* rather than what he/she wants to be, or "ought" to be. He/she surrenders the attempts to make him/herself into something other than what already *is*. This surrender is a surrender of the "old" self-understanding; the self-understanding which attempted to give itself life. In paradoxical change, the individual "confessing" what he/she *is* understands that the change which comes is not as the result of his/her own efforts, but as a result of the "process of impasse resolution." It is part of the "mysterious" process, which Perls once identified with "God's mercy."

Faith as belief. The entire process of rightwising is, in Paul's view, dependent on God's action as manifested in the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Christ. For Paul, Jesus is the sign in which God's saving action is visible, but the death and resurrection of Jesus is itself the saving action. It is not merely a symbol which represents the process. Rather, Paul sees God's act of sending his only son to earth, his crucifixion, and his resurrection, in conformity with the traditions of Jewish sacrificial practice. In this light, Jesus is the price paid by God for human inequity, a price paid by God to God on behalf of mankind.

Therefore, faith requires that an individual actually believe that God did this, that Jesus is the Messiah, that the evil structure of the old eon is broken by this action, thereby restoring the

possibility for righteousness to those previously condemned to sin. This means that the very possibility of gaining life is tied to the belief in the actuality of God's action in Jesus as the Christ. The believer is called upon to accept the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection and to participate in it, dying to one's old self and being born anew in Christ.

Insofar as Paul and his contemporaries believed that the old eon was condemned to sin, the very possibility of rightwising demanded some sign that God had introduced a new possibility into existence. The power of sin in the old eon had to be broken before the righteousness was possible. The end of the old eon was associated with the coming of the expected Messiah. Belief in the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection was belief that he was the expected Messiah. Hence, belief in Jesus Christ was belief that God had acted to break the power of sin in the old eon. Arguing in the reverse, the human experience of the power of the Spirit was evidence that the power of sin in the old eon was broken, and hence, the Messiah had come.

The issue is the confusion of content and process. Insofar as rightwising is process, it can be manifest with a variety of content. From the Gestalt Therapy perspective, Paul is in error when he identifies the power of God's righteousness as a present possibility with the content of the facts of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gestaltist, not laboring with the assumption that his/her world is irrevocably condemned to sin, simply sees the process of impasse resolution as a given observable phenomenon. It is not associated

with any specific content, nor is it bound to any specific historical event or situation. The process exists.

If belief in Christ can be limited to belief in the actuality of the process of righteousness, then Paul and Gestalt Therapy are again in agreement. Belief in the process becomes a characteristic of both the Gestalt Therapist, in parallel with Paul as a proclaimer of the word of God's saving action, and of the patient in parallel with the members of the early church. The therapist believes in the actuality of the process of impasse resolution. He/she knows it is a possibility for the patient to surrender to the impasse, to engage it, and to see it melt away, leaving the self transformed. The belief is based on the therapist's own personal experience as patient and therapist rather than on theoretical information alone. The knowledge of the actuality of the process allows the therapist to willingly lead his/her patients into the teeth of the impasse, to encourage them to stay there waiting for the resolution. The therapeutic willingness to stay with the patient where he/she is, rather than to try to change him/her, even when the patient is already suffering the agony of a "sinful/neurotic" existence, is a willingness born out of deep faith. It is a faith which includes the belief, or more accurately, the sure knowledge of the actuality of the process.

The willingness of the patient to follow and to engage the impasse initially, may either be born out of hope for rebirth or out of desperation in the status quo. Once the decision to stand at the impasse is followed by emerging awareness and the melting of the

impasse, the patient moves from mere hope or desperation to faith as experiential knowledge. This is a faith born of experience. As the follower of Paul may believe in the actuality of Christ because he has experienced him, so the patient in Gestalt Therapy believes in the actuality of the resolution of the impasse because this too has been experienced.

As process, faith-as-belief and impasse resolution are compatible. Insofar as Paul identifies the process with specific content, there is irreconcilable tension between the two processes. There are many individuals who have experienced successful resolution of impasse without any belief in the truth of the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Messiah. These same persons, however, would say that the power of impasse resolution is actual and that they are not condemned to live in fragmentation forever. It seems clear that, as process, what was once associated exclusively with the name and facts of Jesus may now be present in independent "secular" forms.

Life Through the Spirit and Awareness

When the old self of sin surrenders itself, it is reborn and lives in and through the Spirit. It understands itself to be grounded in the very source of life, not just in the fragmented and striving "I" of sin. The Spirit grants freedom from sin, freedom from the law, and freedom from death.

When the old self of neurosis surrenders itself at the impasse, it is reborn in awareness. It understands itself to be grounded in

awareness as an elemental unit of existence. It is a transcending "I" rather than a mere fragment of the whole. Awareness functions with presence, contact, and integration.

Freedom from sin. Freedom from sin means primarily that human existence is no longer under the compulsion of sin, that is, the inevitable split of the self, the fragmentation of the being into warring factions. It is possible to exist, through God's grace, without sin, without fragmenting one's self.

As an integrating process, awareness may be considered freedom from sin. In awareness the self is not split into subject and object as, for example, in introspection. Rather, awareness is an immediate experience in which the self remains whole. Awareness gives the totality of the individual, body and soul, a working relationship, a oneness. Thought is integrated with action. Under sin, Paul can write, "If I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, . . ." But in awareness, an "I" emerges which includes both Paul's "wanter" and his "doer." This "I" is a new seat of existence. It is not reflexively opposed to another fragment of the self, but through the act of alive dialogue, it integrates the self and speaks for the totality. This "I" transcends the smaller "I's" of the state of sin. It is not an entity, but a process itself. It is the process of integrating awareness, the organismic unity. Awareness as an integrating process is freedom from sin.

Freedom from the law. Freedom from the law, as a means of

establishing righteousness, is gained through God's saving action. This may be understood to mean freedom from external criteria of righteousness. The believer is "authorized" to do all things. This is not to be taken to imply that all things are "wholesome" or that the consequences of all things are desirable. It simply means that the "righteousness" of the believer is not determined by his/her conformity to any external criterion.

Paul places the "law of Christ" in the place of the Law. The "law of Christ" is love, and is summed up in the statement, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This law is "written on their hearts." It is intrinsic. Obedience to it is not a "work" but rather is the result of the restoration of inner harmony through God's action.

This concept of the "law of Christ" stands in opposition to the "law of the flesh." The law of the flesh is the law of the realm of appearances. The "law of Christ" is the law of being.

As contact, awareness "demands" that the individual interact with "what is." That is, with reality as it is given. Awareness as contact moves against the distortion of perceptions and the distortion of the relationship of the individual and his/her environment which are characteristic of the neurotic mode of existence. Contact is the ground of love, for without contact there can be no love. Contact as a process presupposes a separation between the loving selves and yet it precludes their divorce. It is a touching, an appreciation of otherness and an appreciation of togetherness.

The love which brings union or fusion is not contactful, for

the lover and the loved merge. Only in full contact can the total self of the lover and the total self of the loved meet, and yet not lose their individual identity. The death of the self which Paul describes is not the obliteration of individuality. Rather, it is the fulfillment of it, for one surrenders oneself to Christ so that one might find one's self. The love of Christ is a love between individuals, between full selves. "Love your neighbor as yourself," implies that both the lover and the loved retain their individual identity. In describing contactful relationship, Perls writes, "The harmonious functioning of the individual and the society depends upon 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Not less, but also not more."² To love either self or neighbor requires that one make contact.

Obedience to the law in the quest for righteousness is replaced, in faith, with obedience to the law of Christ which is love. Obedience to extrinsic "shoulds" is replaced in awareness with contact with the actual. Contact is the ground of love, for it is the simultaneous union and separateness of whole individuals.

Freedom from death. Freedom from death in Paul's thought has two elements. It includes both Paul's notion of an eschatological day in the parousia of Christ when the dead will be resurrected, and also the notion of the gift of life as a present reality. As resur-

²Frederick Perls, *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 224.

rection of the dead and life after death, Paul's thought has no parallel in Gestalt Therapy. However, in the sense of the freedom from death as the present reality of the gift of life, it may be directly compared to awareness as "presence" or "present centeredness."

For the Gestaltist, the power is in the now. This may be taken to mean that the individual cannot directly control his/her destiny. The past is unchangeable, the future without guarantee. What the individual can do is influence some degree of choice in the present moment. He/she may shape what is done with what destiny gives. In awareness, the individual lives in the present, is "present-centered" or has "presence." This does not mean that the individual ignores the past and the future, but that he/she relates contactfully and with awareness to the actual present. In this sense, life is a present reality, God's righteousness is a present reality. For the resolution of the impasse is possible, the breakthrough from neurotic death into explosive life, when the individual enters the present. Freedom from death for the Gestaltist means that one is no longer compelled to suffer the death of a neurotic mode of living, the hesitation, anxiety, self-consciousness, shame and guilt which weigh upon the neurotic. Freedom from death means that the individual who is willing to enter the impasse and wait there, can receive life. The life received comes not through self-effort, but as a gift. "Change comes to you."³

³John Stevens, *Awareness* (Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1971), p. 74.

CONCLUSION

From the above, it appears clearly that there are substantial similarities between the processes described by Paul and by Gestalt Therapy. Two points are incompatible. These are Paul's identification of the receipt of God's grace with the believer's acceptance of the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection; and his expectation of an eschatological day in the parousia of Christ in which the dead will be resurrected.

The expectation of the resurrection of the dead is unimportant in the context of this study. Whether or not this may occur has no bearing on the descriptions of the processes themselves as present realities, that is, as actual experiences of living individuals. The process occurs and either will include the resurrection of the dead or it will not. The purposes of this study may be met by setting aside the eschatological question and limiting our conclusions to the existential dimension.

Paul's Christology is a matter for scholarly debate. It seems clear that he associated the actuality of the process of righteousness with the actuality of the Messiah. It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine the extent to which Paul would tolerate our interpretation of his work in pure process terms, with relative independence from specific content. Still, it is possible to argue that belief in Christ can mean belief in the power of the process of righteousness, and that belief in the death and resurrection can mean the actuality of the process of impasse resolution. From this process perspective,

Paul's work is quite compatible with the Gestalt Therapy view of impasse resolution.

It also seems clear that in Paul's own experience, the critical factor in his conversion was not the content, but the power of the actual process. His personal transformation occurred well after he was in possession of the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. His initial contact with those facts led him to persecute the early church. His personal transformation occurred when he was grasped by the power of the Spirit, and he participated existentially in his own death and rebirth. His confession to the truth of the death and resurrection appears dependent on his participation in the process. His participation in the process does not seem to be dependent upon his belief in the facts. The process, in Paul's own experience seems to be the critical factor.

In addition to these issues of specific content, there is another limitation to the conclusion of the study which must be considered. This is the extent to which the similarities observed are due to the influence of existentialism on both Bultmann's interpretation of Paul and on Gestalt Therapy. The methodology of the study does not presume to validate Bultmann's work, but merely accepts it. The task of critical and scholarly scrutiny has been carried out in the literature of New Testament studies.

The immediate concern is the possibility that the observed similarities are an artifact of existentialism. In the process of viewing these two systems of thought, a common denominator is needed,

and in the case of Paul, interpretation makes the material more accessible. The use of some conceptual common reference is unavoidable if comparisons are to be made at all. The choice of existentialism seems a good one, for insofar as existentialism attempts to penetrate to the structures of existence, it describes structures and processes which are relatively constant in time.

The choice with which the researcher is presented is either to make no attempt to relate New Testament material to contemporary thought and experience, or to run the risk of distortions. Existentialism appears to minimize the distortion while maximizing the accessibility of the material. Nevertheless, it does impose a limitation on the study which may not be ignored.

With these limitations in mind, the conclusion of the study may be stated: Considering the existential dimension, and to the extent that Bultmann's interpretation of Paul is fairly representative, and taking the position that the processes described are not necessarily determined by specific content, it may be concluded that the process described in Gestalt Therapy as impasse resolution is the same process which Paul describes as death and rebirth in Christ. In this sense, Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution is a religious process.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications which this conclusion has may be divided into two main areas: Implications for organized religion, and implications for Gestalt Therapy. Suggestions for future research are

made in each section.

Implications for Organized Religion

This conclusion contributes to the growing "grey area" between religion and psychology noted in Chapter 1, an area in which clear distinctions between religion and psychology are difficult to make. The conclusion of this study, if generalized, raises the question of the relationship between organized religion and psychotherapy. It suggests that the form of the fundamental processes with which both are concerned, is identical.

The study implies that Gestalt Therapy, with its process of impasse resolution, attempts to facilitate the same process as religion does in the name of death and rebirth. The implications which this position holds for religion may be considered in three areas: Theological, Christological, and methodological.

Theological. The source of impasse resolution is outside the fragmented "I" of neurosis. Insofar as the individual identifies with the "I" of neurosis, the source of resolution of impasse is outside of the individual. Insofar as the self of sin is identified with the "I" of fragmenting consciousness, the source of life in the religious process of death and rebirth is also outside of the individual.

The clear implication of the study is that God, as the source of life, is making Himself present for actual individuals in a non-theological form. In the process of impasse resolution in its secular form, the power transforming actual human life is experienced

with intensity. To the person who has experienced the melting of the impasse, there is no question but that the process is actual and a powerfully influential force in daily life. Whether or not this process is associated with the name, God, is secondary to the identification and explication of the process itself.

For the Gestaltist God, as the power of impasse-resolution, is no mere abstraction. His judgment is no mere promise of a day to come. His grace and the gift of his love are experiences lived. His name may have changed. He may be called, "the process," but He is alive and well. His self-revelation is manifest in the "conversion" of actual individuals. This conversion is not the confession of the facts of the life and death of Jesus as the Messiah, but rather a living witness to the power of transforming and transcending awareness.

Future research may assess the degree to which this process can be identified with specific theological formulations of the Christian God. The actuality of a process whose effects upon human lives are so similar to the effect of the process Paul once preached in His name, strongly suggests that this is a fruitful area for investigation.

Christological. For Paul, the power of the Spirit was in its capacity to alter actual lives. A prominent implication of this study is that the Spirit still lives and is recognizable in its influence on the lives of persons. The power of the Spirit, like the power of the process of impasse resolution is not a demon which takes control of the individual, eliminating free will. On the contrary, it is a

fulfillment of free will. It is the capacity of the "I" to transcend itself; to identify, not with any single fragment of the self, but with the process of transcending itself. In Gestalt Therapy, this process is developed without recourse to the traditional language of religion. What first became visible to mankind only in the Christ, now also has visibility in non-sacred terms. But the Gestaltist also thinks of the process of impasse resolution as the possibility of growth and healing, of deliverance from a world of "sin" or neurotic fragmentation. The Gestaltist does not, however, necessarily identify this process with the fact of the historical Jesus.

Gestalt Therapy offers a criticism of Paul. By making belief in the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth a criterion for the receipt of God's grace, rather than a product of the receipt of that grace, the possibility of misunderstanding grace as a "work" is reopened. That is, it becomes possible to misunderstand belief in the facts of the death and resurrection as the purchase price of salvation rather than an existential participation in the process itself. And contrariwise, those who do not confess this belief, may not be understood as saved. Confession also may be misunderstood. The neurotic fragmentation of existence into verbal awareness permits the confessing individual to participate in the tradition of the Christ with words, but without action. Certainly Paul's own intent was that the believer participate in the process, dying and being reborn anew in Christ. Certainly Paul did not understand this as a verbal confession alone. Yet, by associating

faith as a transforming process with the specific content of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, Paul contributes to the possibility of this error. It may be hoped that the understanding of the process as process to be lived will make distortions more difficult.

This confusion of content and process has implications for the Church as the body of Christ. As process, the body of Christ includes all those who, regardless of the specifics of content, participate in the self-transforming process. Therefore, from this process perspective, the Church must not understand itself to be limited to those who confess the content of the tradition of Jesus. Especially, it must not understand itself to be limited to those who confess the content of Jesus of Nazareth without surrendering themselves to the process. For whoever is not willing to surrender themselves to the process, still aspires to the Kingdom of God through efforts of the fragmented "I" and will fail.

Methodological. The conclusion that Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution is a religious process has important methodological implications. Through a limited understanding of the meaning of love, the Christian tradition of pastoral care has sometimes condoned the false kindness which leads the individual *away* from the impasse and keeps him/her dependent and immature. The willingness of the Gestalt Therapist to walk with the individual to the impasse is a willingness born out of personal experience at that place. It is a willingness born out of the knowledge that too much support is surely as destructive as too little. To do for someone, what they can do for

themselves, is not love. It prevents the individual's confrontation with the decision-question, and the possible discovery that something new is possible.

Such an understanding of the Christian doctrine of love is offensive to many, for it violates the sure dependency they enjoy. But the true meaning of impasse resolution as religious process, and the meaning of death and resurrection as impasse resolution, is that the sinner is confronted with the truth of existence and called to decide. The decision is a hard one, it is a decision which may involve death. The minister, as proclaimer of the gospel, must be willing for parishioners to enter the abyss of the impasse and to stay there, waiting to discover what is possible for them.

This is not to say that the clergyman should become a Gestalt Therapist. It is, however, a suggestion that one of the essential elements in pastoral care is a personal familiarity with the religious process of impasse resolution. While familiarity will not make the impasse comfortable, it will allow the minister to stay there with faith, open to new possibilities. It can also remove from him/her the burden of a phobic avoidance of impasse and of life.

The techniques of Gestalt Therapy serve to sharpen the impasse and to focus it. The most essential technique of the Gestalt Therapist is the use of eyes and ears to observe ongoing process, not an armamentarium of gimmicks. It is this ability to perceive and to describe process that is the most valuable contribution Gestalt Therapy makes to the methodology of pastoral care. The ability to

see process is linked to the ability to see the activity of God's saving action in the lives of individuals. It is also the ability to see how individuals desert the impasse and avoid God's gift of grace.

Implications for Gestalt Therapy

The Gestalt Therapist, like Paul, does not make a consistent attempt to analyze the nature of the ground of awareness and the source of impasse resolution. Both content themselves with an analysis of how these processes affect actual individuals. Future research directed toward a comparison of Gestalt Therapy cosmology and its understanding of awareness as a universal principle with a variety of theological and philosophical systems would be highly productive. Specific systems which seem especially relevant are the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, John Cobb's process theology based on Whitehead's thought, and the theology of Paul Tillich. The question which this research might attempt to answer is the nature of God as the source of impasse resolution.

Gestalt Therapy may be accused of a certain isolationism. The discovery of the viability of a process orientation has led to a somewhat anti-historical, anti-cognitive bent. Perls' own appreciation for religion and philosophy was both profound and under-played. His indebtedness is obvious, but often uncredited. This study has the implication for Gestalt Therapy that its work is not done in isolation, and that the indebtedness and parallels to other human

endeavors may well be made explicit, and the details of similarity and difference clarified.

It seems clear that Gestalt Therapy is historically dependent upon those ideas of religious process which are unique to Christianity in spite of the apparent independence from Christian language which it enjoys. Is it of any advantage to Gestalt Therapy to acknowledge this indebtedness? Certainly there are individual clients for whom such an acknowledgment is powerfully beneficial, but there are also others for whom such an idea might not be useful. No general rule can be specified with reference to client acknowledgment. There does, however, seem to be an advantage for both the practitioner of Gestalt Therapy and the theoretician to understand themselves as working within a tradition originating in antiquity. The practitioner who is aware of the identity of impasse resolution and the religious process of death and re-birth understands the full significance of the process and is less likely to be seduced into the reduction of Gestalt Therapy to mere gimmicks and turn-on techniques.

Similarly, the theoretician in Gestalt Therapy might benefit from an acknowledgment of the indebtedness. One particularly difficult area of Gestalt Therapy theory is its interest in metaphysics and its own metaphysical inadequacy. A serious theoretical consideration of the historical dependence may well clarify this area.

One further implication for Gestalt Therapy lies in the relevance of the Christian tradition to Gestalt Therapy's own interest

in establishing a community.⁴ The hope here is to develop communities which provide support for the therapeutic process and offer opportunities to develop a life style not so subject to the destructive effects of contemporary society. These communities emphasize the growth aspects of the Gestalt Therapy perspective, and "witness" to the power of the process.

Similar attempts have been made by religious groups for centuries. By understanding its own community effort in continuity with these earlier efforts, Gestalt Therapy may avoid some of the errors which have been made, adopt some of the principles of success, and take upon itself the peculiar richness of vision which follows from a fully historical perspective.

SUMMARY

This study investigated the claim that Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution is a religious process by means of examining the relationship of impasse resolution to the theology of Paul as interpreted by Rudolph Bultmann.

Gestalt Therapy theory was approached and limited to the perspective of the process of impasse resolution. Impasse resolution was presented as a process through which the neurotic fragmentation of existence was transcended in full awareness. The principle which governs impasse resolution is the theory of paradoxical change. In

⁴Barry Stevens, *Don't Push the River* (Moab, UT: Real People Press, 1970).

this theory it is impossible for the "I" to change itself. Rather, it may change only when it surrenders the attempt to change itself. Awareness is a process of increasing contact, increasing integration and increasing presence. Its emergence allows the resolution of the impasse. The existence of the process of impasse resolution was demonstrated in transcripts of three therapy sessions.

Religious process in the theology of Paul was characterized as a process of death and rebirth, the transcension from sin to life. The ability for the individual to make this transformation is not a property of the self, but a gift from God. The fragmentation of the "I" in sin is overcome in the process of God's gift of right-wising. God's righteousness brings freedom from sin, freedom from the law, and freedom from death. The meaning of these terms is explored in existential terms.

The conclusion drawn is that, as an existential process, Gestalt Therapy impasse resolution is a religious process.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION
AND PASTORAL COUNSELING

- Angyal, Andras. *Neurosis and Treatment: A Holistic Theory*, eds. Eugenia Haufmann and Richard M. Jones. New York: Viking Press, 1965.
- Argyle, Michael. *Religious Behavior*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959.
- Berthold, Fred. *The Fear of God: The Role of Anxiety in Contemporary Thought*. New York: Harper, 1959.
- Boisen, Anton Theophilus. *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience*. New York: Willett, Clark, 1936.
- _____. *Out of the Depths: An Autobiographical Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience*. New York: Harper, 1960.
- _____. *Problems in Religion and Life: A Manual for Pastors, with Outlines for the Co-operative Study of Personal Experience in Social Situations*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946.
- _____. *Religion in Crisis and Custom*. New York: Harper, 1955.
- Bourguignon, Erika. *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973.
- Brown, Delwin, Ralph E. James, Jr., and Gene Reeves (eds.) *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971.
- Browning, Don S. *Atonement and Psychotherapy*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- _____. *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973.
- _____. "New Trends in Pastoral Care: The Search for Method in Religious Living," *Christian Century* (September 5, 1973), 850.
- Clinebell, Howard J., Jr. *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1966.
- Colborn, Francis. "Psychotherapy and Conversion," *American Exegetical Review*, XVIII:3 (February 1973), 75.

- Cox, Richard. *Religious Systems and Psychotherapy*. Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1973.
- Dreger, Ralph Mason. "Some Personality Correlates of Religious Attitudes as Determined by Projective Techniques." Washington: American Psychological Association, 1952.
- Harding, Esther. *The "I" and the "Not-I."* New York: Pantheon Books, 1965.
- Hartmann, Heintz. *Psychoanalysis and Moral Values*. New York: International Universities Press, 1960.
- Helfaer, Philip M. *The Psychology of Religious Doubt*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.
- Hiltner, Seward. *Pastoral Counseling*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949.
- _____. *Preface to Pastoral Theology*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1958.
- _____. *Religion and Health*. New York: Macmillan, 1943.
- _____. *Self-Understanding Through Psychology and Religion*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
- Jennings, Floyd. "Private Pastoral Counselors Raise Troubled Issues," *Christian Advocate*, XVII:3 (February 1973), 3.
- Johnson, Paul Emanuel. *Christian Love*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951.
- _____. *Pastoral Ministration*. London: Nisbet, 1955.
- _____. *Personality and Religion*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1957.
- _____. *Psychology of Pastoral Care*. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953.
- _____. *Psychology of Religion*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945.
- Johnson, Richard E. "The Future of Humanistic Psychology," *Humanist*, XXXV:2 (March/April 1975), 13.
- Jorjorian, Armen D. "Reflections Upon and Definitions of Pastoral Counseling," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXIII:224 (May 1972), 7.

- Jung, C. G. *Collected Works*. 14 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- V. 14 *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 1970.
- V. 9:II *Aion*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 1959.
- V. 11 *Psychology and Religion*, 1958.
- Koffka, K. *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963.
- Köhler, Wolfgang. *Gestalt Psychology*. New York: Mentor, 1947.
- _____. *The Task of Gestalt Psychology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Luria, A. R. "The Functional Organizations of the Brain," reprinted in Richard G. Atkinson (ed.) *Contemporary Psychology*. San Francisco: Freeman, 1971.
- McNeill, John. *A History of the Cure of Souls*. New York: Harper, 1951.
- Maslow, Abraham Harold. *Dominance, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization: Germinal Papers of A. H. Maslow*. Ed. Richard J. Lowry. Monterey: Brooks-Cole, 1973.
- _____. *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. New York: Viking Books, 1971.
- _____. *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964.
- _____. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962.
- Mehrabian, Albert. *An Analysis of Personality Theories*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Moustakas, Clark (ed.) *The Self*. New York: Harper, 1956.
- Mowrer, O. Hobart. "Is the Small-Groups Movement a Religious Revolution?" *Pastoral Psychology* (January 1972), 50.
- Naranjo, Claudio. *The One Quest*. New York: Viking Press, 1972.
- _____, and Robert E. Ornstein. *On the Psychology of Meditation*. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

- Oates, Wayne Edward. *The Bible in Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953.
- _____. *The Christian Pastor*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951.
- _____. *An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959.
- _____. *The Religious Dimension of Personality*. New York: Association Press, 1957.
- Oden, Thomas. *Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967.
- _____. *Kerygma and Counseling*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- _____. *The Structure of Awareness*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1969.
- Ornstein, Robert. *The Psychology of Consciousness*. San Francisco: Freeman, 1972.
- Otto, Herbert A., and John Mann (eds.) *Ways of Growth*. New York: Pocket Books, 1971.
- Piaget, Jean. *Psychology and Epistemology*. Trans. Arnold Rosin. New York: Viking Press, 1971.
- Pribram, Karl H. (ed.) *Brain and Behavior*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Rogers, Carl. *On Becoming a Person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961. Sentry Edition, 1970.
- Sperry, Roger. "A Revised Concept of Consciousness," *Psychological Review*, LXXVI (1969), 532-36.
- Steair, Ernest. "A Dramatic View of Pastoral Counseling," *Christian Advocate*, XVIII:9 (April 1973), 15.
- Tart, Charles. *Altered States of Consciousness*. New York: Wiley, 1969.
- _____. "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences," *Science*, CLXXVI (June 16, 1972), 1203.
- Teyler, Timothy J. (ed.) *Altered States of Awareness: Readings from Scientific American*. San Francisco: Freeman, 1972.

Wise, Carroll Alonzo. *Religion in Illness and Health*. New York: Harper, 1942.

_____. *Pastoral Counseling: Its Theory and Practice*. New York: Harper, 1951.

B. RELIGION, THEOLOGY, AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

Altizer, Thomas J. J. *The Descent into Hell*. New York: Lippincott, 1970.

_____. *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.

_____. *The New Apocalypse*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967.

_____ (ed.) *Toward a New Christianity*. Atlanta: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967.

_____, and William Hamilton. *Radical Theology and the Death of God*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.

Bible. (Revised Standard Version.) New York: Nelson, 1953.

Bornkamm, Günther. *Jesus of Nazareth*. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.

Brown, D. Mackenzie. *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

Buber, Martin. *Between Man and Man*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

_____. *I and Thou*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

Bultmann, Rudolph K. *History of the Synoptic Tradition*. Trans. John Marsh. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

_____. *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*. Trans. R. H. Fuller. New York: World, 1969.

_____. *Theology of the New Testament*. Trans. Kendrick Grobel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.

Cobb, John B., Jr. *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965.

_____. "Intrapsychic Structure of Christian Existence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XXXVI:4 (December 1968), 327.

_____. *Living Options in Protestant Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.

_____. *The Structure of Christian Existence*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967.

_____. *Varieties of Protestantism*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Two and The One*. Trans. J. M. Cohen. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

Ellison, John W. (ed.) *Nelson's Complete Concordance of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. New York: Nelson, 1957.

Enslin, Morton Scott. *Christian Beginnings*. New York: Harper, 1956.

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. 4 vols. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Koch, Klaus. *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.

McKelway, Alexander J. *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich*. New York: Dell, 1964.

Tillich, Paul. *Love, Power and Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

_____. *The Shaking of the Foundations*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

_____. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. in 1. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

_____. *Theology of Culture*. Ed. Robert C. Kimball. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Zahrnt, Heinz. *The Question of God*. Trans. R. A. Wilson. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966.

Zimmer, Heinrich. *Philosophies of India*. Ed. Joseph Campbell. New York: Pantheon, 1953.

C. GESTALT THERAPY

- Beiser, Arnold. "The Paradoxical Theory of Change," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper, 1971.
- Bloomberg, Lawrence I., and Richard L. Miller. "Breaking Through the Process Impasse," *Voices*, IV:3 (Fall 1968), 33-36.
- Carmer, James C., and David L. Rouzer. "Healthy Functioning from the Gestalt Perspective," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 20.
- Downing, Jack, and Robert Marmorstein. *Dreams and Nightmares*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- Emerson, Patricia, and Edward Smith. "Contributions of Gestalt Psychology to Gestalt Therapy," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 8.
- Enright, John. *Thou Art That: Projection and Play in Gestalt Therapy*. San Francisco: Lodestar Press, 1971.
- Fagan, Joen. "Personality Theory and Psychotherapy," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 4.
- _____. "Three Sessions with Iris," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 42.
- _____, and others. "Critical Incidents in the Empty Chair," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 33.
- _____, and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- Glasgow, Peter. "Paul Goodman: A Conversation," *Psychology Today* (November 1971), 62-96.
- Goldstein, Kurt. *The Organism, A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.
- Goodman, Paul. *Growing Up Absurd*. New York: Random House, 1960.
- _____. *Five Years*. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Greenwald, Jerry. "The Art of Emotional Nourishment," unpublished manuscript.

- _____. *Be the Person You Were Meant to Be*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.
- _____. "An Introduction to the Philosophy and Techniques of Gestalt Therapy," *Bulletin of Structural Integration*, I:3 (1969), 9-12.
- _____. "Nourishing and Toxic Encounter Groups," *Voices*, VIII:2 (Summer 1972), 30.
- Kempler, Walter. "The Experiential Therapeutic Encounter," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, IV (1967), 166-72.
- Knight, Walter. "Gestalt Therapy and Pastoral Counseling," *Pastoral Counselor*, V:1 (1967), 16-21.
- Latner, Joel. *The Gestalt Therapy Book*. New York: Julian Press, 1973.
- _____, and M. Sabini. "Working in the Dream Factory," *Voices*, VIII (Fall 1972), 38-43.
- Lederman, Janet. *Anger and the Rocking Chair: Gestalt Awareness with Children*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.
- Mermin, Dan. "Gestalt Theory of Emotion," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 15.
- Naranjo, Claudio. *The Attitude and Practice of Gestalt Therapy*. Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1974.
- _____. "Contributions of Gestalt Therapy," in Herbert Otto and John Mann (eds.) *Ways of Growth*. New York: Pocket Books, 1971.
- _____. *The Healing Journey: New Approaches to Consciousness*. New York: Pantheon, 1973.
- _____. "I and Thou: Here and Now: Contributions of Gestalt Therapy," Esalen Institute, paper no. 5, 1967.
- _____. "Present-Centeredness: Technique, Prescription, Ideal," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- _____. *Techniques of Gestalt Therapy*. Berkeley: S.A.T. Press, 1973.
- _____. *The Unfolding of Man*. Palo Alto: Stanford Research Institute, 1969.

- Nevis, E. *Beyond Mental Health*. Cleveland: Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, n.d.
- O'Connell, Vincent. "Until the World Became a Human Event," *Voices*, III (1967), 75-80.
- Perls, Frederick Solomon. *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*. New York: Random House, 1969.
- _____. "Four Lectures," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- _____. *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy*. Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1973.
- _____. "Gestalt Therapy and Human Potentialities," in Herbert Otto (ed.) *Exploration in Human Potentialities*. Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1966.
- _____. *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*. Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1969.
- _____. *In and Out the Garbage Pail*. Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1969.
- _____. "Morality, Ego-Boundary and Aggression," *Complex*, no. 9 (1955), 42-51.
- _____. "Theory and Technique of Personality Integration," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, II (1948), 565-86.
- _____. "Workshop vs. Individual Therapy," *Journal of the Long Island Consultation Center*, (Fall 1967), 13-17.
- _____, Paul Goodman, and Ralph Hefferline. "Gestalt Psychotherapy," in *Psychotherapy and Counseling*. New York: Rand McNally, 1969.
- _____, Paul Goodman, and Ralph Hefferline. *Gestalt Therapy*. New York: Dell, 1951.
- Perls, Laura. "Notes on the Psychology of Give and Take," *Complex*, no. 9 (1953), 24-30.
- _____. "The Psychoanalyst and the Critic," *Complex*, no. 2 (Summer 1950), 41-47.
- _____. "The Gestalt Approach," *Annals of Psychotherapy*, II (1961).

- _____. "One Gestalt Therapist's Approach," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Pp. 125-29.
- Polster, Erving. "A Contemporary Psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* (February 1966), 1-6.
- _____. "Sensory Functioning in Psychotherapy," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Pp. 70-76.
- _____, and Miriam Polster. *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1973.
- Pursglove, Paul. *Recognitions in Gestalt Therapy*. New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1968.
- Reich, Jayne. "The Gestalt Art Experience," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Pp. 274-84.
- _____, and M. Vich. "Psychological Growth and the Use of Art Materials: Small Group Experiments with Adults," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, VII (1967), 7, 163-70.
- Reich, Wilhelm. *Selected Writings, an Introduction to Orgonomy*. New York: Farrer, Strauss and Grioux, 1960.
- Resnick, Robert W. "Gestalt Therapy: A Reply to an Attack," unpublished manuscript, 1975.
- Rosanes-Berrett, Marilyn. "Gestalt Therapy as an Adjunct to Treatment for Some Visual Problems," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Pp. 257-62.
- Rosenberg, Jack. "A Gestalt Approach to Thumb Sucking," *Arizona State Dental Journal* (July 1971).
- _____. "Gestalt Awareness for Apprehensive Patients," *Dental Survey* (June 1971), 48-55.
- _____. "The Human Potential Trip: Awareness Training for Professionals," *California Dental Journal* (December 1971).
- Shepard, Martin. *Fritz*. New York: Dutton, 1975.
- Shepherd, Irma. "Limitation and Cautions in the Gestalt Approach," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Pp. 234-38.

Shostrom, Everett. *Man the Manipulator*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967.

Simkin, James. "Festschrift for Fritz Perls." Unpublished paper. Los Angeles, 1968. (Mimeographed.)

_____. "In the Now" film through Psychological Films.

_____. "Individual Gestalt Therapy." Tape available at AAP Tape Library, Atlanta.

_____. "Interview with Dr. Frederick Perls." Tape available at AAP Library, Atlanta.

_____. "An Introduction to the Theory of Gestalt Therapy." Cleveland: Gestalt Institute of Cleveland.

_____. "Mary: 2 Sessions with a Passive Patient," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Pp. 162-68.

_____. *Mini-Lectures in Gestalt Therapy*. Albany, CA: Wordpress, 1974.

Stephenson, F. Douglas. *Gestalt Therapy Primer*. Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1975.

Stevens, Barry. *Don't Push the River*. Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1970.

Stevens, John. *Awareness*. Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1971.

Stewart, R. Dugald. "The Philosophical Background of Gestalt Therapy," *Counseling Psychologist*, IV:4 (1974), 13.

Stone, Harold. "Symbolic and Expressive Modes in Psychotherapy," Los Angeles: Center for the Healing Arts, 1973. (Mimeographed.)

Tobin, Stephen. "Self-Support, Wholeness, and Gestalt Therapy," *Voices*, V:4 (Winter-Spring 1969-1970), 5-12.

Van Dusen, Wilson. "Existential Analytic Psychotherapy," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1960), 20.

_____. *The Natural Depth in Man*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

_____. "The Theory and Practice of Existential Analysis," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, XI (1967), 310-22.

- Walker, James Lynwood. *Body and Soul: Gestalt Therapy and Religious Experience*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1971.
- Wallen, Richard. "Gestalt Therapy and Gestalt Psychology," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- Yontef, Gary M. "A Review of the Practice of Gestalt Therapy." Los Angeles: Tridents Shop, California State College at Los Angeles, 1971.
- Zinker, Joseph. "Notes on the Phenomenology of the Loving Encounter," *Explorations*, X (1966), 3-7.
- . "On Public Knowledge and Personal Revelation," *Explorations*, XV (October 1968), 35-39.